

# THE **New Wine** PRESS

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**Volume 25 No 4 • December 2016**

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**The Most Wonderful Time  
of the Year?**

**The Gift of Counseling**



# Let us serve God with holy joy.

*-St. Gaspar del Bufalo, founder of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood*

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# THE New Wine PRESS

Volume 25 No. 4 • December 2016

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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.

## THE New Wine PRESS

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Kansas City Province

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## The Whisper of God

by Fr. Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S., Publications Editor

In the December 2011 *New Wine Press*, Companion Kathy Schroeder wrote about an experience she had at a Confirmation retreat, where the participants reflected on the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. One of the students was blindfolded and instructed to walk to the other side of the room using only the directions being given by the others. What the student didn't know was that all of the directions would be shouted, except for one person who would walk alongside and whisper. As you might expect, the student heard only the shouting and had a difficult time responding to the conflicting advice—and never did hear the whisper of the “Holy Spirit,” giving complete and accurate directions.

These are “loud” days in our country as Christmas approaches, and one may wonder where the “whisper of God” might be heard. Consider what the late and great humorist, Erma Bombeck, wrote about an experience she had during Sunday Mass.

*I was intent on a small child who was turning around and smiling at everyone. He wasn't gurgling, spitting, humming, kicking, tearing the hymnals or rummaging through his mother's handbag. He was just smiling.*

*Finally his mother jerked him about and in a stage whisper that could be heard in a little theater off Broadway said: “Stop that grinning! You're in church!” With that, she gave him a belt and, as the tears rolled down his cheek, she added, “That's better,” and returned to her prayers.*

*We sing, make a joyful noise unto the Lord, while our faces reflect the sadness of one who has just buried a rich aunt who left everything to her pregnant hamster.*

*Suddenly I was angry. It occurred to me the entire world is in tears, and if you're not, then you better get with it. I wanted to grab this child with my tear-stained face close to me and tell him about my God, the happy God, the smiling God, the God who had to have a sense of humor to have created the likes of us.*

*I wanted to tell him that our God is an understanding God, who understands little children who turn around and smile in church, and even curious little children who rummage through their mother's handbags. I wanted to tell that little child that I too have taken a few lumps for daring to smile in an otherwise solemn religious setting.*

*What a fool, I thought, this woman sitting next to the only sign of hope—the only miracle—left in our civilization. If that child couldn't smile in church, where was there left to go?*

Maybe the whisper can be heard in the joy of children. A joy that adults don't always share; a joy that is sometimes snuffed out; a joy that is sadly absent for many of the little ones today. Kathy put it well in her concluding words: “As we go through this holy season with all its shouting, may we be open to hear the whisper of God in our lives. May we hear the whisper of the hungry and lonely. May we hear the whisper of Peace.” ✠

# A Passion for the Possible

by Fr. Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S., Provincial Director

Brother David Steindl-Rast in his book, *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*, writes, “Hope looks at all things the way a mother looks at her child, with a passion for the possible.” As we approach this Christmas season, we hear how our ancestors in faith looked at hope this way. It is the way Elizabeth looked at John, calling him by that name over the objections of family and neighbors. When her husband Zechariah, muted because of his lack of trust that God makes all things possible confirmed the name, he burst into a song that would become our morning canticle. And all those neighbors and friends who were so confined by tradition asked, “What will this child be?” as John’s ancient parents found themselves dwelling in possibility.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, pondered all these events surrounding his birth in her heart. Imagine her holding her newborn son, cradling him in her arms as he slept, the smell of damp straw clinging to her threadbare shawl, gently brushing away a stray piece from his head, dwelling in possibility: What will this child be?

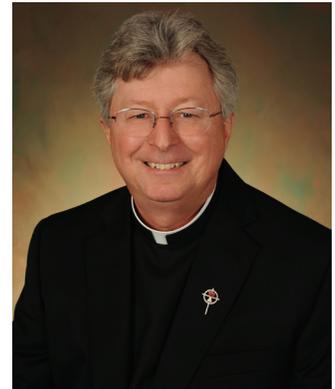
Brother David calls this kind of hope a “way of looking that is creative. It creates the space which perfection can unfold. More than that,” he writes, “the eyes of hope look through all imperfections to the heart of all things and find it perfect.” God and our covenant of love with God and one another is at the heart of the new creation and at the heart of all things. With God, all things are possible. Impossible dreams become a reality because God dwells in possibility. Where God is, everything is possible.

As we look forward to the celebration of Christmas and the beginning of a new year, it offers us an opportunity to ask, “What will this child be?” This child of God dwelling within me. What will this congregation committed to the spirituality of the Precious Blood be? What will the Kansas City Province be? How will we incarnate the love of God dwelling in possibility in community, in our neighborhoods, in our faith communities, in our workplaces and schools?

You see, the spirituality of the Precious Blood calls us to a new creation. This is at the heart of the incarnation: we are called to live in a new way. During the past year, even as the political campaign deteriorated into harsh and divisive attacks, members of the Kansas City Province have sought to dialogue about our community life and how we move forward into the future. Our conversations have been rich, deep, and wide expressions of what our founder St. Gaspar called “the bond of charity.”

We have attempted to be incarnational in our conversation. That is, our words count—they mean something. This is important, or else our desire to become a new creation—to create something new as Missionaries of the Precious Blood living and serving in the United States—is more of a curiosity than a commitment. If we are just curious about a new creation and not committed to becoming a new creation, then we will die. We will cease being relevant in the church and

*continued on next page*



in the world. We might go out in a blaze of glory—actively engaging in ministries that reflect our charism of renewal and our spirituality of reconciliation—and maybe even start new ministries. But unless we embrace the reality that we need to create something new, we will cease to be relevant. The Nobel laureate, Bob Dylan, put the question like this: Are we busy being born or busy dying?

So, what are we creating? We are creating a new community of priests, brothers, Companions—women and men who are imbued with the spirituality of the blood of Christ and seek to live the spirituality in their daily lives. We are creating safe places where reconciliation and renewal rule the day through healing and truth circles. These places are called “Mission Houses,” and they will be places where members and Companions will live in community, pray and eat together, and open their doors to the world, especially the remnants of the world who feel forsaken and forgotten.

We are creating a community where three or four Precious Blood people will go to the fringes, go where others dare not or cannot go, and establish a presence that will be welcoming as they live in solidarity with those for whom hope has worn thin. It will mean that we say goodbye to some parishes and faith communities that have been served by Precious Blood priests and brothers for many years. But in many of these places the spirituality of the blood of Christ will continue to be central to the life of these parishes because of the presence of Companions who will make certain renewal and reconciliation remain hallmarks of parish life.

We have called our three members living at St. Agnes Parish in Los Angeles to be intentional in their community and ministry to reflect how a mission house in the model of St. Gaspar responds to the signs of these times. I can see a mission house at Most Holy Redeemer Parish in San Francisco where several Precious Blood people minister among the poor, the homeless, youth, and other marginalized groups within the city.

Yes, we have some places that we already call mission houses, but it is not enough to call a place where two or three members live together a mission house. The members must be intentional in their desire to model their community and mission after the vision of St. Gaspar. During this coming year as we prepare for the Community Life Symposium, this will be one of the key ingredients of our evolution into a new creation. In the words of the 2013 General Assembly challenge, we will “engage in a series of significant guided

conversations about what it means to live authentically and what it means to live a simple lifestyle.”

We will dialogue about Gaspar’s vision of a mission house and we will seek to incorporate the values and essential ingredients in that vision into a lived reality. Gaspar Mission House in Kansas City, Schaefer Mission House in Liberty, Sonnino Mission House in Berkeley will not just be places where members live under the same roof. Rather, the members will be intentional in their living together. These will not be “closed” houses or “private” dwellings; they will be places where others will gather who are seeking to find community, a listening heart, a challenging word, hospitality, and hope.

Also, as part of this year’s dialogue among members and companions, one of the mandates from the 2013 General Assembly is “to deepen our commitment to working towards the fullest participation possible of lay associates in our communal life, spirituality, and apostolic work.” The Companion movement continues to grow not just in numbers but also in a deepening commitment to living out the spirituality of the Precious Blood in our lives. Ours is an incarnational spirituality and it must be lived or else it will atrophy and be of no use in a world that is crying out for reconciliation.

We will dialogue about continuing to develop Precious Blood Renewal Center (PBRC) into a place of refuge, refreshment, reconciliation, and renewal. Because of the requests we receive for larger groups and the lack of space available, leadership believes it is necessary to remodel Stukenborg Mission House into a larger conference space for day groups. During my first-term as provincial, in response to the General Assembly’s call to develop a new ministry or expand a present ministry, the provincial council proposed expanding the ministry of renewal at Precious Blood Center. The members expressed a reluctance to build a new building on our property at Liberty. But the requests continue and our space remains limited. At our August gathering of members, at least three priests expressed a desire to work in the ministry of renewal at PBRC in the future.

Leadership is now proposing making Schaefer Mission House a residence for members and transforming Stukenborg Mission House into a space for large groups to gather for renewal. This will be an expensive proposition, but as Father Ron Will reminded us in his column in last month’s *New Wine Press*, when we are committed to living out our charism, when we are good stewards of the resources we have been given, we are blessed beyond measure. In commemoration of the Holy Year of Mercy, we dedicated the Reconciliation

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# Sprouting the Seeds of Community

by Michael Kirkland, Candidate in Formation, Chicago, Illinois



Michael Kirkland (third from the left), with acolytes and Fr. Matthew Link at Most Holy Redeemer Parish in San Francisco.

Recently I had the opportunity to attend another discernment retreat at Precious Blood Center in Liberty. During my visit I had the pleasure of walking the path to the recently constructed labyrinth. As I walking the winding path I could not stop thinking of Jesus's journey to Jerusalem and my own journey in life. It's been a long one, with many twists and turns, just like Jesus. I could not help thinking how beautiful and inviting the labyrinth appeared as it waited for me to walk its path. My thoughts and reflection began to drift to this amazing journey with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

My journey began with my amazing pastor and mentor Fr. Matt Link. He began the path by sprinkling seeds of the Precious Blood charism throughout the inquiry phase. Fr. Matt was gracious and patient with me, and sometimes that wasn't easy with a lost sheep like me. He was excited to journey with me and gave me insight into community and parish life, devoting a lot of time and energy to my vocation during my discernment. In addition, my home parish, Most Holy Redeemer in San Francisco, has been very supportive and friends there have been kind and loving to me as I continue my journey in Chicago.

The day I left San Francisco it felt like I was eighteen and leaving for college for the first time. I arrived at Midway Airport in Chicago. Fr. Lac Pham welcomed me with a big hug. I will never forget the hospitality; it meant so much to me. After arriving at the house, we grabbed a hot meal and had some good

conversation. I retired to my room and tears of joy began to flow down my face.

It has been a blessing to meet others and grow in our community these last few months. My formation directors and brothers have been so gracious. The light of our house is Fr. Dennis Chriszt. He is full of the Holy Spirit and has a laugh that is continuous. Sometimes I just go downstairs and sit with him to feel the spirit and have a good laugh. My little-big brother Matt Keller has been gracious and kind; he is guiding me through school and helping me ease into formation. Matt uses his amazing gifts to care for our small garden and lawn. I'm his little helper. Our time together gardening gives strength to our brotherhood and friendship. My guiding brother Matt Perez and I reserve some extra time each week in our busy schedule to pray and explore our Precious Blood spirituality together. Matt and I will always have a special bond because we entered initial formation together. My other little-big brother Greg Evers is always there to lend an ear when I just need a friend. Greg is a young man way ahead of his years. It was also exciting to hear we had a brother in the house. Brother Ton Sison has an amazing smile and a great sense of community. We instantly had a special bond. My stomach growls with excitement when he cooks his amazing Filipino dishes. He teaches at CTU and it's comforting to know he is around campus. Brothers rock!

Just recently I got a full dose of the true meaning of "the bond of charity." About ten years ago I was hospitalized and I found myself alone and fearful about my future. The only person that visited me was the hospital chaplain. I was admitted to University of Chicago Hospital, and once again those fears of loneliness arose. This time my experience was much different. I was never alone through this event. My herd of brothers kept coming and my cell phone was blowing up. They told me that I was not on this journey alone. Some members came in collar, so the medical team was quite aware I was part of a religious community. My nurse kept calling me Father. I finally told her that I'm not a priest. I kindly informed her I was only a candidate in a religious community, and she replied "Ok, Father." There is never a dull moment in this amazing adventure, and even in time of darkness the light shines in. The loving support was extended from our Companions as well. Trudy

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# The Most Wonderful Time of the Year?

by Vicky Otto, *Precious Blood Companions* Co-director

As the calendar page recently changed to November, one cannot help but start thinking about the upcoming holiday season. Retail establishments, radio stations and advertisers don't take a breath after Halloween before the Christmas decorations are hung in stores, radio stations play continuous Christmas music, and advertisers remind us of all the things that we must have for a great Christmas.

I believe that we all for a moment gaze at these pictures and long to be transported to a place where everything is perfect, our families and friends are perfect, our homes are perfect, and the food we created for the holidays is perfect. I also believe that many of you are like me, that as we grow older we enjoy looking at the beautiful pictures, yet our gatherings are just as beautiful, not because of all the beautiful decorations, but because of the love and togetherness we have when we gather with family and friends. There is a certain release that comes when we realize that we don't need the perfect table and the perfect decorations, but rather what we need is the love and compassion that comes from being together with the people we care about. This is and should truly be what holidays are all about. It makes the famous Christmas song, "It's the most wonderful time of the year," come alive.

Despite the decorations, the food, or the music, for many people the holidays become not "The most wonderful time of the year," but rather the most painful time of the year. Think for a moment about all those people who work during the holidays so that each of us can enjoy them in peace and safety. Think for a moment about all those in our

Precious Blood family who minister to people around the world who are not able to be with their families and friends during the holidays. Think for a moment about those who join their families only to face disapproval of displeasure rather than the happiest time of the year. Think for a moment about all those who are unable to join their families for the holidays because their families have told them that they are no longer welcome, due to the life choices a person has made that the family disapproves of. Whether the circumstances of separation are temporary or whether they are permanent, there is pain and a sense of loss for everyone involved.

There is a line of the Vision Statement from the General Assembly that motivates me to respond to this pain and loss. The Assembly wrote, "As a courageous community of missionary disciples, the Cry of the Blood calls us to the edges of society to be ambassadors of Christ for reconciliation and hope as we minister with the People of God." As a Precious Blood community, we all respond to the cry of the blood and the call of to be missionaries. Fr. Barry Fischer wrote once that to be a missionary "does not necessarily imply that we go far from home in the geographic sense. It happens when we leave our known centers of security and our familiar landmarks. It is where our own personal space or territory is opened up to others and where others invite us into theirs." There is no time like the holidays to bring this vision of the General Assembly to life and to become missionaries by spreading the good news of hope and reconciliation in the world.

As we begin this holiday season may we truly become missionaries, in that we step out of our comfort spaces to reach out with love and peace to those on the edges who are suffering in pain during this time. Take the step of a missionary by offering a word of encouragement or love to someone who may be alone. Take the step of a missionary by sharing an invitation for a meal or other activity to someone who may be alone. Take the step of a missionary by taking the time to sit and form that safe space with someone who is in pain so that they may share their story as they long for a time of reconciliation.

Holidays can be a time of merriment and joy. Many gifts will be given out during the Christmas season. May we make every effort to give the gifts of peace, renewal and reconciliation to those in need so everyone can truly say, "It is the most wonderful time of the year." ✠

# Four Irritatingly Beautiful Questions

by Rena Tulipana, Liberty Missori Companion

Fall has always been my favorite time of year. The crisp mornings, the beautiful clear blue skies, and the changing color of the trees fill me with peace, comfort and awe. It is also the time during which the Companions of the Precious Blood hold their annual retreat in this part of the country. This is an event I look forward to each fall. The beautiful Marillac Center in Leavenworth, Kansas afforded a perfect venue for this retreat and the much-needed time for reflection, prayer, reconciliation, and companionship.

We were graciously welcomed to the retreat house at the center, shown our rooms, and then gathered with other retreatants to spend a few minutes renewing friendships and relaxing in conversation. This is but another plus to our retreats. It provides a time to reconnect with Companions of other groups to share our triumphs and perhaps our challenges.

This year's retreat, "Four Irritatingly Beautiful Questions for Disciples and Companions of the Precious Blood" piqued my curiosity. What in the world would this be about? What kind of questions are we talking about? Who is Fr. Ben Berinti? How will this awaken my spirituality? Questions I had about the four questions! I did not need to worry, because this year's retreat proved to rate in my top choices for a truly spiritual retreat. Fr. Ben is a gifted speaker who asked intriguing questions that left me with much to ponder and many seeds for further reflection.

The four irritatingly beautiful questions that were the frame of Fr. Ben's talks opened my eyes to a whole new world. To begin we discovered that the questions are not questions we bring to God—questions like will you help me, will you save my beloved from disease or death, and so on. No, they are questions God asks us! What an interesting concept. Father Ben used scripture to guide us through the questions God is asking of us!

The first question God asks us in scripture comes in Genesis, "Where are you?" This question set me to reflecting on where I am in my relationship with my spiritual journey, my family, and my fellow companions. Father Ben told us if you don't know where you are, how can you know where you are going? What a simple question, yet so difficult for me to answer. Taking an

inventory of where I am in my world is just the beginning of becoming aware of where I am going.

The first question led us to other questions that stirred me to ponder my awareness of the people, the gifts given by God, as well as to my surround-

ings—an opportunity to contemplate on the distractions in my life. Am I awake? Am I allowing the busy world to distract me from God and from taking time to pray and praise Our Lord for the gifts given?

We were challenged by Fr. Ben to take an inventory of our spiritual abundance, or lack thereof. Fr. Ben's third question reminded us to take stock of our "abundance" or "scarcity" and questioned what to do when we feel insufficient. This question resonated with me. Often I feel overwhelmed by the many "things" to be done in life, things that leave me with little time to pray or to be there for others. It seems to be the way of the world—too busy! We are called to give this to God, to "offer it up," and give thanks for what we have been given. Such an easy but fresh outlook to have. I pledge to work on this question!

Perhaps the most meaningful part of the retreat for me was Fr. Ben's exegesis of Isaiah 6:1-8. This passage is God's call to Isaiah. Fr. Ben presented this passage as a series of steps in God's call to Isaiah. These steps are a culmination of all the questions asked during the retreat. They are a perfect conclusion to these (not so) irritating beautiful questions: We have it (supply), we take inventory of what we have; whom do we know who can help our brothers and sisters in need? How can we answer "Send me!"?

If you did not attend the annual retreat yet, mark your calendar for the upcoming retreats in Orlando, Florida or Menlo Park, California. You are in for a wonderful journey into seeing ourselves as we truly are. As Fr. Ben said, our mission today is to share the Incarnation in our hurting world by helping others through seeing Christ in them. ✠





# The Gift of Counseling

by Fr. Garry Richmeier, C.P.P.S., Sacramental Minister at St. James Parish, Kansas City, Missouri

People have often asked me if I always wanted to be a priest. I usually respond by describing my decision to be ordained as a gradual process, involving growing up in the community, becoming comfortable with the idea of ministering as a priest, and valuing priesthood as a good way to help people. In some ways it feels like the priesthood “happened” to me, in that things seemed to fall into place to get me here.

My journey to becoming a professional counselor was a little bit different. There was no community or organization guiding and supporting me along this path. It was rather an idea that came out of the blue, as it were, and persisted. Maybe it was a seed planted by my Dad when I was young. He always fancied himself an informal counselor. Sometimes the idea was simply in the back of my mind, and sometimes it had a more urgent feel to it. But it never disappeared.

The idea of becoming a trained counselor became more of a focus for me soon after I was ordained. People would come to me as a priest with their problems, asking for advice and help. I was always a pretty good listener, but that was the only thing I could do

that seemed helpful. I would give advice, but often they had heard that same advice from others and it was not helpful. I wanted to find a way to help more, and I thought training in counseling would enable me to do that.

Around this time I happened to pick up the book *The Family Crucible* by Augustus Napier and Carl Whitaker. It followed a family as they did family counseling with the authors. Reading that book was a real “aha!” moment for me. It portrayed counseling not as fixing something that was wrong with individuals, but as helping all members of the family use their gifts and strengths to change the relational dynamics that resulted in problems. That book convinced me that that was the kind of counseling (often called Systems Theory Counseling) I wanted to do.

An opportunity came when the provincial director, Fr. Tom Albers, asked me to be director of our college formation program at Rockhurst University. It was not at the top of my list of preferred jobs, but I said I would do it if I could pursue a Masters Degree in Counseling at the University of Missouri-Kansas City

at the same time. The deal was made, and in four years I was a Licensed Professional Counselor.

It is very difficult to overestimate the effect that doing counseling has had on me, especially regarding my view of myself and my view of human beings in general. I have been privileged to hear many peoples' stories, and I feel honored that so many people have entrusted these precious narratives to me. I have been given much more through this ministry than I will ever be able to give back. Especially valuable to me is the understanding and insight I have gained in working with people, which enables me to be more compassionate with others and with myself.

As I have listened to many peoples' stories over the years, I have come to realize that we all have the same story—the human story. The details and particularities are different with each person, but there is a common theme running through each person's life story. That is because we are much more alike than different. At the most basic level, we all want to be loved and to love, we want to know we are worthwhile, we want to feel safe and secure, and we want our lives to “count.” Everyone's story, from the gang member to the Sunday morning preacher, is about their efforts to find these things.

An example: “John” and “Mary” came to counseling because their fights and disagreements had increased in frequency and intensity. Mary said that John was always working, and had little time or energy for her. John said that Mary was always criticizing him, and that she didn't appreciate the sacrifices he made for his family, especially since they were putting two children through college. John said he was on various medications to control high blood pressure, to calm intestinal problems, and to help him sleep. His doctor had told him that stress was aggravating all his physical problems.

In counseling John came to realize that he believed he was worthwhile (“counted”) only if he was very financially successful and could provide all the material comforts his family wanted. John said he had learned this from his father, a very successful businessman. So to this end, John was (unconsciously) willing to sacrifice his time, his health, and even his relationships with his wife and children.

In time, with his family's help, John was able to come to know that he was worthwhile regardless of how much money he brought home. He reduced his work hours and spent more time at home, which resulted in less criticism from Mary and a much better marital relationship. With less stress, John's physical

problems improved drastically and he had less need for medication.

Like John, we are all trying to “matter.” Knowing this as a counselor means that I don't have to “start from scratch” with each person who comes to me for counseling since I know the details of their life will fit into the human story somehow. It also enables me to be much less judgmental about people, including myself, since we are all in the same boat, trying to get the same things. With more understanding and less judgment, I am also able to be more compassionate, which is one of those basic things everyone is looking for.

Counseling is not about “fixing” someone who is broken or screwed up, even if that is what the counseling client asks for. It is simply about assuring the person of what already is, that he/she is important and does “count.” It is also about helping people find other ways to understand that about themselves. If I can help people to that goal, then they don't have to waste their time and energy (sometimes in harmful ways) trying to prove they “matter.” They can then be content and at peace in offering their unique talents and gifts to those around them.

At the core of my counseling work, as well as my spirituality, lies the truth that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. It is in coming to a greater realization and acceptance of that truth that each of us finds what we are looking for. ✠

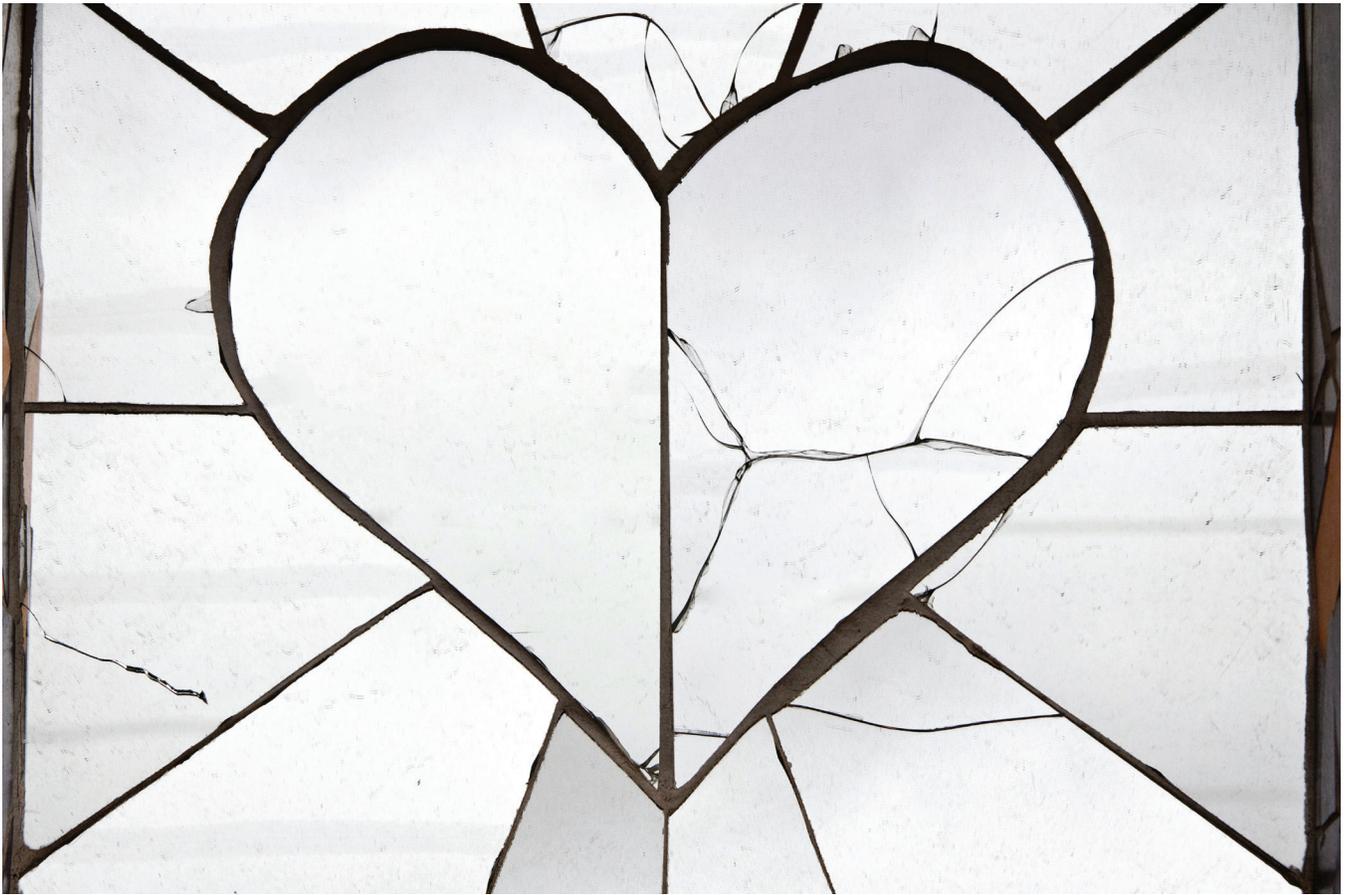
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#### *Leadership, continued from page 4*

Labyrinth on the grounds of Precious Blood Renewal Center on August 16<sup>th</sup>. Around the same time, we received an unexpected donation that almost paid for the project.

This is what incarnational spirituality looks like. Now is the time for us to be committed to life. Is it possible? Do we desire it? Is this vision something that advances who we are as people of faith, Precious Blood people, ambassadors for Christ, messengers of God's mercy and ministers of reconciliation? Does this vision further the reign of God? My answers to these questions is yes, because I believe we are people of faith that know a new creation is possible.

And so, as we celebrate the incarnation of Jesus, I make no apologies for believing that all of this is possible. My most fervent prayer as we approach Christmas and begin the new year is that all of us have a passion for possibility. ✠



## The First and Greatest Commandment

by Fr. Dave Kelly, C.P.P.S., PBMR Director

We were driving home after giving a talk at Dominican University and Anthony was more quiet than normal. Usually that means he is deep into his phone—on Facebook or some other social media app. But no phone...head toward the passenger window of the car.

“Hey, Anthony, anything the matter?” I asked. He shook his head no; he still was staring out the window. “Anthony, look at me,” I said. He turned toward me with tears in his eyes.

“What’s up?” I asked. “What’s hurting you?” And through the tears he spoke of how alone he felt—like everyone left him.

Anthony has his issues, has been locked up a couple of times. He accompanies me quite a bit when I am asked to give talks on the neighborhood and the violence. He is an excellent speaker, talks from his heart, keeps it real. Today was no different. The college students were captivated by his story. He spoke of his life and the struggles. “I am still struggling,” he told the

group. “I just don’t want to end up like my father or my brothers.”

That was what was bothering him. He spoke well. He told the truth. But on the ride home, it came tumbling down on him. He felt the words he shared so openly. His father, whom he barely knows, has been locked up most of his life. His older brother is doing 55 years; his little brother has been locked up for six months and will probably have to do a few years (he’s only 16); another brother, who is just a year and a half younger than he, got locked up a couple weeks ago.

Anthony feels like they all left him.

“You know we gotcha, right Anthony?” I said. “Yea, Fr. Kelly, I know you got me. It is just like, I don’t know, like nobody is thinking about me. My ma, she doin’ her thing. I just feel alone.”

Luckily (I can say this now) the traffic was Chicago traffic—stopped. We had time to talk. And talk we did.

We offer many programs at PBMR. People want numbers, structure, success rates—but we know all the programs in the world can’t take that feeling of being

alone away. That takes having someone who is willing to be there for you. It takes someone who is willing to listen; it takes someone there assuring you that they “Got your back.”

Maybe I listened because I had to—there was nowhere to go. But I’d like to think I listened because I know that is what is needed.

I was listening to public radio the other day and two regular contributors, David Brooks of the *New York Times* and E.J. Dionne of the *Washington Post*, were speaking of theology and the criminal justice system. David Brooks told a story of an old friend who has worked with “at-risk” youth for 40 years. Someone asked this veteran of youth work which program, out all the many programs, really worked. His reply was that he didn’t know of any such program—but in his experience, what really did work, what really did have a real impact, was the consistent presence that helps a kid feel that they are loved.

This is precisely why I do this work. You see, all my life I have felt loved. Whether it was my parents years ago, my sisters and brothers today, or my friends and colleagues, I have always felt loved. And so when a kid tells me he’s got no one, feels all alone—well it breaks my heart.

As a society, we need to do better. That any child in our world grows up feeling like he or she has no one is sinful. I am not talking about the occasional feeling of loneliness, I am talking about the overall feeling that I am alone, that I have no value.

There is a lot of loneliness in this world and a lot of fear. There are little children who are afraid to go to bed at night because they are not sure what will happen to them or to their parents. There are children who wonder what will become of them, to whom can they go or who cares if they exist. They wander our streets, we judge them, we fear them, we ignore them.

Pope Francis, on a recent trip to Sweden, stated, “New situations require new energy and a new commitment,” and then he offered a new list of Beatitudes for modern Christians. I quote #2: “Blessed are those who look into the eyes of the abandoned and marginalized and show them their closeness.”

We can do better. We need to do better. It is living out the first and greatest commandment. ✠

*Michael Kirkland, continued from page 5*

Miller, for example, sent me an awesome gift and sweet card. She has been so supportive of me from the beginning of my journey and has never given up on me.

Each morning we pray together. Some mornings I resist leaving my warm bed, but each time after prayer I feel a little lighter. Each evening we gather at the Eucharistic table to celebrate our bond of charity. This is a powerful moment each time we gather. As we stand together at the table I feel the power and strength of the Cup of the Covenant. After the Lord’s Prayer we offer peace, and I get a little closer to my community and God. I feel my heart opens to all possibilities and I am eager to share the Good News with others.

My favorite part of community is sharing a meal with my brothers. I’m a bayou boy from the Big Easy. I love to cook and have a good time. We just relax and have some great conversations. Each time we gather laughter rings out throughout the meal. I’m reminded of my grandmother who always told me “a great meal is the highway to the heart.”

My formation continues to evolve and the possibilities seem endless. I’m beginning to deepen my spirituality, as it becomes our spirituality. My studies have been challenging and exciting all at the same time. I’m starting to understand scripture in ways I never imagined. I’m also pleased to begin working with Catholic Charities and continue working with disenfranchised and marginalized communities. Oh yes, I almost forgot, my house chore is trash duty and it continues keeps me humble.

I was fearful that my introvert tendencies would not be welcomed. But that’s not the case. I felt from the beginning that Fr. Timothy Armbruster and Fr. Matt Link really opened my eyes to community; their energy is infectious and their love for our faith is graciously shared with others. I find that is a common theme in our community. And I want to be a part of it. I have found a place to call home and I am very thankful to God each day for the privilege to walk with some amazing brothers. ✠

# Circles as a Path to Harmony

by Kathy Keary, *Kansas City Companion*

Several years ago as a group of us were returning from an interfaith peace service, a fellow parishioner asked our pastor how we could be instruments of peace in our war-torn and violent world. He wisely stated that we can be channels of peace within our own realm of influence: in our families, work places, and communities. I took his message to heart and have tried to implement his advice in my life. Over the years, as conflicts arise, I have recognized that often times his words are easier said than done. As people of reconciliation, we are called to foster right relations with all people. After all, Jesus shed his blood for us so that we would be reconciled to the Father and one another.

The great divisions that exist in our country and our world have been amplified this year by an intolerant narrative against people of different faiths, races, and sexual orientation. I have personally been horrified by the hateful rhetoric, as I am sure many of you have been also. What can we as Precious Blood people do to foster a spirit of understanding and harmony among all people without exception, to be people of reconciliation and peace in our own community, to live out Jesus' mandate to "love one another"? I sense the answer may be grounded in intentionally developing relationships with those who are different than us. For that reason, we intend to invite people of diversity to the Precious Blood Renewal Center for the purpose of sharing our stories, increasing our mutual understanding, acceptance, and compassion of all without exception. Beginning in January, we will hold Circles on the first Wednesday evening of the month.

Circles have existed forever as a symbol of unity and wholeness. Community developed in ancient times as people shared their stores gathered around a fire to keep warm and safe and cook their food. Archeological discoveries confirm this ancient practice that continues today in indigenous groups around the world. We see a modified version in our society as people gather in a circle for support, prayer, and faith sharing.

What makes the Circles we intend to hold at the Center special? A simple ritual will begin and conclude our time together marking the space and time as sacred. The center of the circle will contain symbols of our purpose of celebrating unity among diversity. We will invite into our space values that will foster our

purpose, such as compassion, understanding, and truth. A safe space will be created so that all are comfortable sharing from the heart. We will use a heart as a talking piece that will be passed around the circle. The person holding the heart will speak their truth while the others prayerfully listen as compassionate witnesses. Room will be made for silence and reflection as we absorb all that we hear. Leadership of the Circle will be shared.

Wednesday evening, January 4, 2017 we will hold Circle training at the Center. As people of hospitality, the training will prepare us to welcome others into our Circle the following month. We invite all to attend the training whether you would like to become involved in our monthly "Circles at the Center" or would like to learn more about Circles to use in another setting.

Circles have the potential to be life-changing as we bring into our day-to-day activities a deeper understanding and acceptance of people different than ourselves. A sense of solidarity with others will be strengthened as we learn of the many common threads that unite us as God's people. In the words of Pope John Paul II, "solidarity helps us to see the 'other'... as our 'neighbor,' a 'helper,' to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God." A heightened concern for the common good will likely follow.

The vision statement of the Companion movement, *Gather, Send*, states: "We bring the cup of our spirituality to ever-widening circles, to people of all generations, races, and cultures." Precious Blood spirituality calls us to be in union with all. We invite others into the Circle, not to change them, but as a means to increase our mutual understanding, respect, and compassion for the other as we endeavor to live in harmony with all God's creation. ✠





**Let us serve God  
with holy joy.**

**- St. Gaspar del Bufalo**



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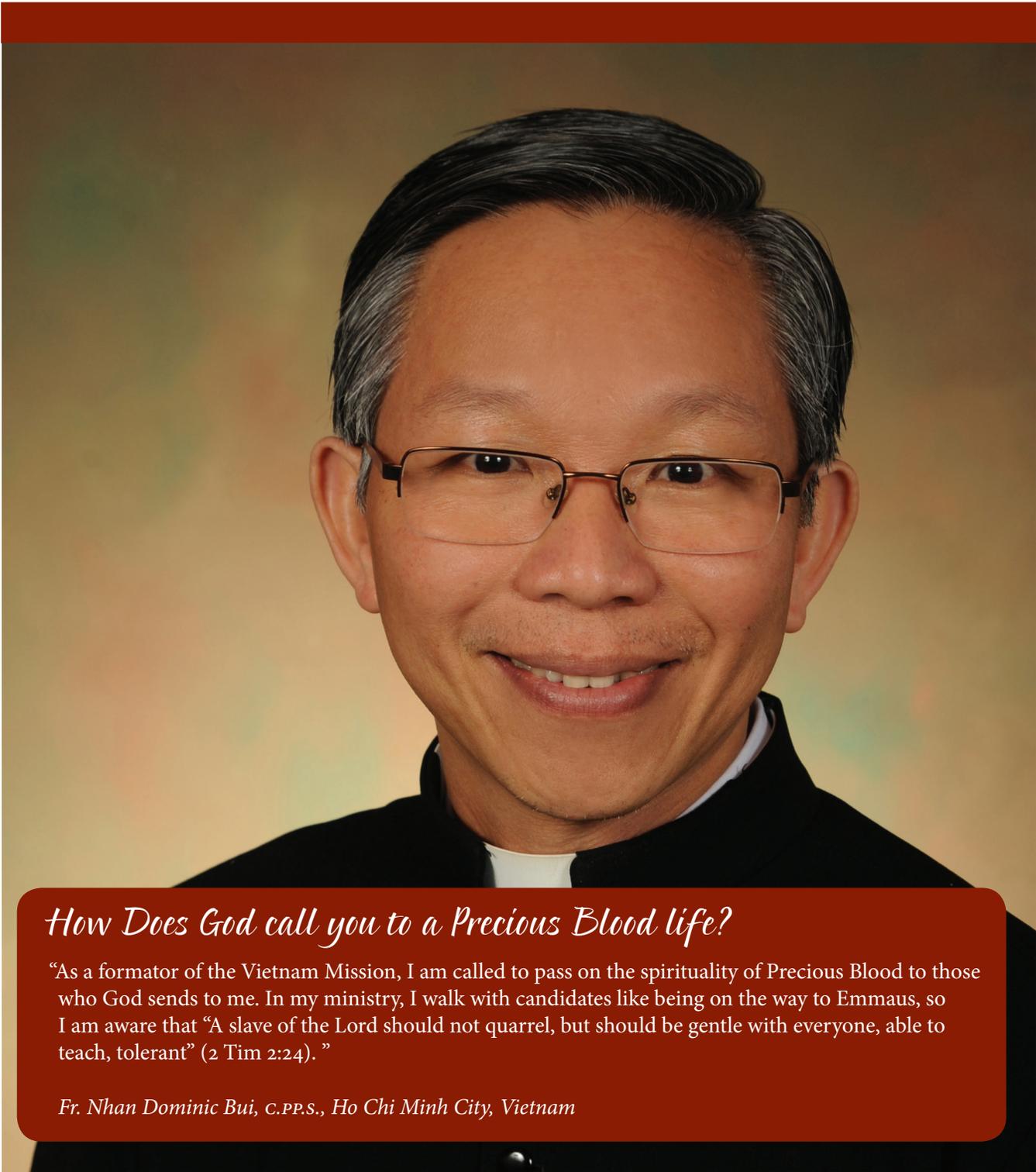
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*How Does God call you to a Precious Blood life?*

“As a formator of the Vietnam Mission, I am called to pass on the spirituality of Precious Blood to those who God sends to me. In my ministry, I walk with candidates like being on the way to Emmaus, so I am aware that “A slave of the Lord should not quarrel, but should be gentle with everyone, able to teach, tolerant” (2 Tim 2:24).”

*Fr. Nhan Dominic Bui, c.p.p.s., Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*