



The New Wine Press

Motivated by the Spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

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Br. Daryl Charron, C.P.P.S. at Giano, Italy

Call to Action

Br. Daryl Charron, C.P.P.S., Justice & Peace Director

“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. This Blood impels us to affirm the dignity of life as we embrace a wounded humanity and creation.” These words from our XX General Assembly Vision Statement are especially inspiring for justice and peace ministry in our congregation. As a delegate to this Assembly, it was exciting for me to be a part of writing this vision, as well as the provocative propositions and action steps. One provocative proposition talked about our missionaries being a committed presence in the midst of a suffering world and entering into healing relationships with those who cry out for reconciliation and liberation. Another said that we are energized by the vision of the Second Vatican Council and Catholic Social Teaching

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and beckon all the baptized to unite with us in living the universal call to holiness and mission. It was encouraging to come up with action steps to help implement the vision that we created. Within each of our Congregation's units, we said that opportunities for formation pertaining to the Second Vatican Council and Catholic Social Teaching should be made available. In addition, it would be beneficial for the General Curia to appoint a liaison to help units share in their work for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC). The Assembly challenged each of the units to initiate or expand a ministry with those on the edge, the marginalized.

The JPIC is not a new venture for our Congregation. Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation was one of the focus points for the General Administration, whose importance is derived from the mandate of the last two General Assemblies: the Extraordinary General Assembly which took place in 2004, and the XIX General Assembly which took place in 2007. Fr. Felix Mushobozi, C.P.P.S. has served as both the Secretary General and Animator of JPIC the last six years. Upon meeting with him, I discovered that much of his time was taken up by being Secretary General and not much time was given to the purpose of the JPIC. His recommendation was that the appointed liaison for JPIC be full time in that ministry only. I agree with him. He suggested that beyond awareness of social justice issues we are called to weigh these issues carefully and to provide an evangelical response to them as a renewal of our mission. Whereas some of our units have established the focus for their mission depending on local sensibilities, some do not have a clear vision well elaborated as yet. A full-time person could give more adequate leadership and service to our members and have time to participate in events in the perspective units.

Overall, I found it a privilege to participate in the XX General Assembly and I am now a strong proponent for the Appreciative Discernment Process. I think it served us well in both the election and in writing our vision statement. I hope we use it in the Kansas City Province in the future in elections as well as other times of discernment. I felt the Appreciative Discernment Process truly helped us carry out the theme of being "a prophetic multicultural communion for the renewal of the Church and the reconciliation of the world." I liked the fact that the process was rooted in an appreciation for the good that already exists in our Congregation and was so positive in its approach to leadership and implementation of change based on becoming the best we can be.

Action Steps

[The following is taken from the "Message from the XX General Assembly."]

In the Assembly we...discerned specific action steps that could be taken to enhance our faithful journey towards the realization of the Vision. Through the initial work in the small groups and then refined in a plenary session of the General Assembly, the following action steps were accepted by a consensus decision of the Assembly:

Action Steps to Help Us to Incarnate Our Spirituality

From the time of St. Gaspar, the Congregation has been blessed with a deeply rich spirituality. This spirituality has been further developed over the past thirty years as missionaries have struggled to integrate the spirituality into a variety of contexts. We have reached back into the scriptures for a strong foundation and we have identified the powerful symbols of Cup, Cross, and Covenant as being particularly important for us. The provocative proposition developed during the General Assembly calls us to further incarnate this spirituality into our preaching, ministry, and our very lives.

As part of this message, the Assembly reminds the Congregation of these important points:

The sharing and dissemination of materials concerning Precious Blood Spirituality is essential to the integration of the spirituality into our lives. This sharing should take place both within a unit and between units. The General Curia should continue to facilitate this dissemination as needed.

The Congregation has already developed different resources for the further development and articulation of Precious Blood Spirituality. These include printed material, the International Spirituality Center in Salzburg, Merlini Center of Spirituality in Perú, the Center for the Study of the Blood of Christ in Italy, and the North American web-based spirituality center. It is vital that the Congregation promote and make better use of these resources in the future.

The Assembly also calls on the General Curia for specific action:

We recognize that the gift of our charism should be central in the lives of our candidates. In order to ensure that

our candidates are exceptionally formed in our spirituality, the next formators' workshop should be dedicated primarily to assisting our formators in becoming more knowledgeable and skilled in this aspect of the formation process.

Action Steps to Realize Our Vision for Mission

From the earliest years of St. Gaspar's life he was dedicated to helping build the Reign of God.

From his work with the poor in Rome of his childhood to his preaching on the Precious Blood at San Nicola in Carcere, St. Gaspar lived a life of mission. This mission has been entrusted to us for the 21st century. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council and the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation, we see in both Gaspar and the Council the call to work for both the renewal of the Church and transformation of the world.

As part of this message, the Assembly reminds the Congregation of these important points:

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council we should offer opportunities for formation pertaining to the Council and Catholic Social Teaching to members in all units.

We are also preparing for the Bicentennial of the foundation of the Congregation. Units should take this time to further develop their knowledge, appreciation, and understanding of the life and vision of St. Gaspar.

The Second Vatican Council calls the Church to recognize and respond to the signs of the times. We ask the Congregation to do the same by further integrating our use of technology and social media into the life of the units. The advances in technology will allow us to truly be the "1,000" tongues proclaiming the Precious Blood for which St. Gaspar prayed.

The Congregation has a decentralized governmental structure, yet there is a need for coordination in the mission. We call on the General Curia to appoint a liaison to help units share in their work for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation.

The Assembly challenges the new General Curia to:

Explore ways, along with the Provincial leadership teams from the Cincinnati and Kansas City Provinces, in which the Chicago based Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation can be a resource for other units. We recommend the expanded use of "Listening Circles" as a specific practice of reconciliation.

Develop a process to more fully prepare units for the experience of sharing personnel. Both the units that send and the units that receive missionaries need to be prepared for the unique challenges of being a multicultural community. The missionaries themselves should also receive appropriate preparation before embarking to a new culture and upon the return to one's home unit.

The Assembly challenges each of the units to:

Develop and begin to implement a plan for reaching out and offering spiritual, human, and ministerial renewal to the local clergy and the local church within their given context. A progress report is expected at the 2014 MMS.

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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Initiate or expand a ministry with those on the edge, the marginalized. Units are not required to begin new ventures in new places, but should work in their specific contexts. A progress report is expected at the 2014 MMS.

Action Steps to Realize Our Vision for Community Life

As a Society of Apostolic Life, we occupy a fairly unique place within the wider tapestry of religious life. We are not canonically bound by the evangelical vows, yet we are called to live them out. Gaspar desired that we would be bound together by a bond of charity, in *vinculo caritatis*. Our community life is an integral component of and cannot be separated from our call to mission. In fact, all three pillars, spirituality, community life, and mission must remain integrated. To be faithful to our call from Christ, all three require our attention. At the same time, the Assembly recognizes that this community life must be made concrete in a variety of localized circumstances.

As part of this message, the Assembly reminds the Congregation of these important points:

Our Normative Texts and various Statutes of the units provide us with a treasury of resources outlining healthy community life. Common prayer, the celebration of the Eucharist, house congresses, common table and recreation, and even District gatherings are essential components of our community life. Each unit is reminded that it is their responsibility to see that these norms are followed.

Communication is also a critical component of community life. Newsletters, websites, and publications help maintain the connections between members and between units. Yet, in our busy and hectic world, often our efforts at staying connected fall short. The Assembly calls on units to designate someone to tend to the lines of communication within units, between units, and with the General Curia. Along with communication, to the best of their ability, units should seek to translate material for the use of the wider community.

We are a community of missionaries. It is appropriate that periodically we celebrate within the units our commitment to the Congregation and our on-going commitment to the mission. Units will find it beneficial to develop community rituals to recognize this commitment.

The Assembly challenges the General Curia to:

Similar to the work done over the decades with spirituality and mission, the Assembly calls on General Curia to

lead the worldwide Congregation in a substantial exploration of what specifically comprises an authentic living of community life in a C.P.P.S. context. One of St. Gaspar's unique contributions to the Church was his notion of mission houses. The General Curia is called on to engage the entire Congregation in further developing this form of community life and mission.

The Assembly challenges each of the units to:

Engage in a series of significant guided conversations about what it means to live authentically and what it means to live a simple lifestyle.

Develop and/or deepen our commitment to working towards the fullest participation possible of lay associates in our communal life, spirituality, and apostolic work.

Action Steps to Realize Our Vision of Leadership

A significant portion of the Assembly's time was spent discerning what the Congregation needs in its leadership. Our Normative Texts are clear that all members are called to exercise and share leadership within the Congregation. Our chosen leaders, at all levels, see in Christ a model of servant leadership.

As part of this message, the Assembly reminds the Congregation of these important points:

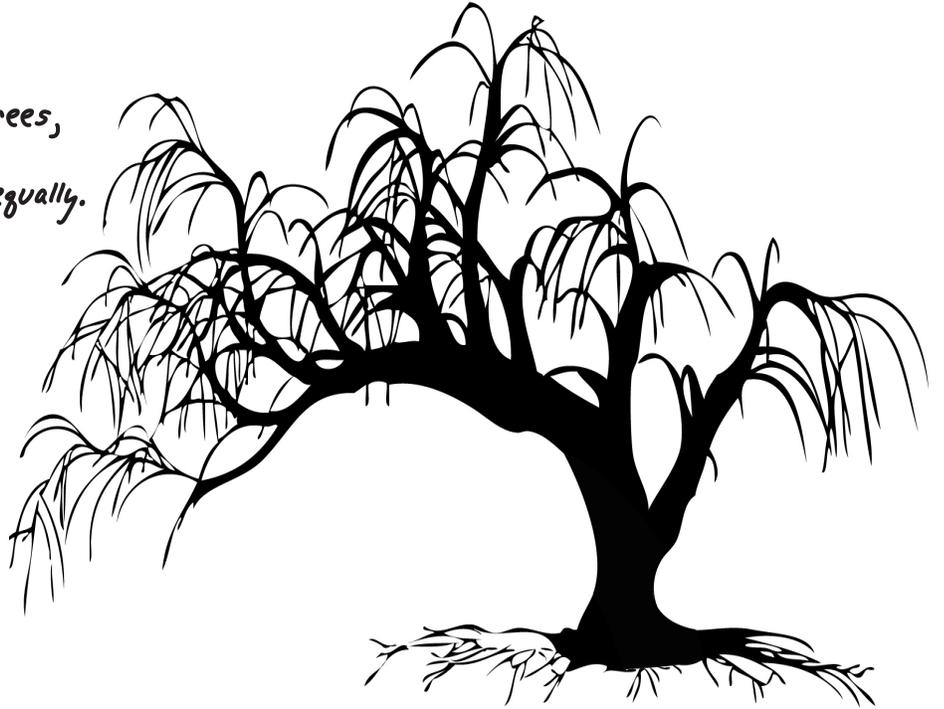
Leadership is best exercised when every member shows a responsible initiative in promoting the welfare of the Congregation. Chosen leaders, however, have specific responsibilities within the units. This work of leadership is best exercised collaboratively.

Leaders, especially directors, should ensure the ongoing formation of all members, but with special attention to the newly incorporated, recently ordained, aged, and infirm members. Directors should identify and promote resources for the ongoing health and wellness of members.

Directors of units should have leadership as their primary ministry. Directors need to know the patrimony of the Congregation, exercise good interpersonal skills, live in community, recognize the gifts of members, and be men of prayer in order to effectively serve the Congregation.

Family Tree

We all spring from different trees,
 Don't mean we aren't created equally.
 We all was a creed made with
 dust under the trees,
 among the evils of the weeds.
 Sunshine we can see,
 Air so we can breathe,
 Food so we can eat,
 under our whole family tree.



- Keith Lucious (reprinted from *Making Choices*, a PBMR publication)

Seeking a Place in the World

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

Orlando has been locked up eighteen times. He first came into Juvenile Detention Center at the age of 12. At age 17 he no longer looks like the little kid who first came into the juvenile center. These days he spends most of his time in segregation for rule violations or other infractions of the institution. Many would label him, even at his young age, a habitual criminal. And while Orlando's future might be uncertain—perhaps even bleak—he has much to teach us.

Orlando has been a ward of the state since six months of age. The number of times that he has been in detention center pales in comparison to the number of placements he has seen over his seventeen years. Each time he is detained, there is also the added dilemma of finding him a new placement. His extended stays in juvenile detention are usually due not to his crime, but because of the lengthy time it takes DCFS to find him a new placement.

Obviously, with the instability in his life, he has a hard time maintaining lasting relationships. People do not remain in his life for any significant time. He has come to expect that those whom he meets, even those who seem to care, will soon be out of his life. He has built up a strong defense against being hurt; he doesn't let anyone too close. While he can be a likable young man, he keeps people at a distance.

What happens when those who are supposed to care for us—mother, grandmother, family—abandon us? What's the impact of the prolonged trauma of abandonment and neglect? Experience and research tells us that when someone has experienced abandonment or neglect, when they don't have any significant attachments in their life, the result is ACES—Adverse Childhood Effect. Research says that we might be able to handle one or two issues in our lives, especially if we have stability and support, but



when we suffer from a host of adverse childhood effects, like abandonment, incarceration, abuse, lack of significant relationships, the result can be devastating.

Trauma cuts at the very core of who we are and how we see ourselves. If the person who is supposed to be our primary caregiver abandons us, it causes us to question our self worth, our sense of purpose. Orlando has grown up feeling as though he is undeserving of being loved. He masks the emptiness and lack of self-esteem by acting out.

I say he has much to teach us because in many ways we are in a state of crisis with a whole segment of our children. Children are growing up disconnected, isolated from all the safety nets that should be there when family situations warrant some kind of intervention. Churches, schools, neighborhood organizations, parks—all those places that have important places within communities—are not reaching the many Orlandos of the world. For a host of reasons, many children are growing up outside the societal structures that help create and sustain community.

What we at the Precious Blood Center find, both in the detention center and in the neighborhood, are young people who feel alienated from supportive communal relationships. And since they don't feel wanted, they begin to seek that belonging elsewhere. They begin to identify with others who experience similar feelings of alienation. In many ways gangs are a symptom of a deeper issue.

A ninety-five year old civil rights woman from Detroit speaks about how “we need to put the neighbor back into

the hood.” We used that as our motto for the past several summer programs—putting neighbor back in the hood. Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J. famed priest in California who began Homeboy Industries, calls it the need for “kinship”—a sense of being connected, of belonging to one another. The First Nation People have a saying when someone commits a harm or a crime: “You act as though you have no family.” Pope Francis told a group of bishops and priests that they needed to “go out and become church” for those outside the walls of the church

The spirituality of the Precious Blood is about relationships that can serve to heal the pain and hurt so many carry within them. We are called to claim the same zeal that motivated Gaspar as he went into the mountains in search for those who had been scattered, separated and disconnected.

As the news continues to report the violence in Chicago and other urban areas, and as we experience the stress and strain of those in our own communities, we need to have the same sense of urgency that demanded Gaspar leave his diocesan roots and become a missionary—an urgency/zeal that has motivated us for almost two centuries. In 1815 Gaspar felt that he needed to do something radical as he formed an unlikely band of men and women who were willing to live out a spirituality that the world so desperately needed. Gaspar heard the “cry of the blood,” and today, some two hundred years later, that same cry can still be heard.

Let's Talk About Possibility

Dave Kelly, C.P.P.S., PBMR

Too often, when people speak of our neighborhood, they focus on the problems and struggles—all the things that are wrong with the neighborhood. The violence, lack of adequate education, fatherless homes, incarceration, etc., become the topic of conversation. No one can argue the reality that the struggles can be, at times, overwhelming, but they are not the full story.

I firmly believe that we need spaces and places where people can come and speak of the pain: the heartbreak at losing a child to violence, the frustration and hurt at having to visit a son or daughter who is incarcerated, the daily struggle of unemployment and poverty, and the many other moments in which we feel isolated and alone. These moments of coming together can enable us to begin the process of healing. One of the more powerful gatherings here is on a Saturday morning when mothers come together and share their stories. Each of them has a child who is incarcerated. The room is filled with emotions; bouts of laughter and tears are pretty constant. You need only to pass by the “circle room” to know that this gathering is part of their healing journey. Reconciliation demands that we create these spaces where people can come together and allow their story to be heard.

There is more, however, to our story. We cannot allow ourselves to be defined by the problems we endure. Even in our neighborhood, where violence seems to be the norm, there is the hope for a community where children can play in the front yard without fear. We must have the hope that we can provide our children with the basics of a good education, adequate healthcare, support and unconditional love. While we cannot deny the pain, we have to include spaces and places where we can speak about the possibilities—the possibility of a peace, the possibility of adequate employment.

For years in our C.P.P.S. district meetings and community assemblies the conversation regularly turned toward the lack of vocations, the severe shortage of priests, the inability to remain in some of our long-term pastoral commitments, and the host of other problems we as a religious community faced. Without being intentional about it, we began to live into the discourse of negativity. Our

problems threatened to become our identity. A couple of years ago, with some bold leadership, we began to ask different questions. We went from talking about the lack of vocations to writing bold and provocative statements about our dreams. Slowly we are beginning to live into this new discourse.

In a similar way, as we look to build up our neighborhood, we need to speak of possibilities rather than problems. The challenge for neighborhoods such as ours is to gather not to merely talk of the violence or lack of resources, but also the possibilities. Peter Block, in his book, *Community, the Structure of Belonging*, says we need to shake free from community gatherings around the problems and begin to speak of the possibilities. Possibility, as Block sees it, is more than just a goal or vision; it is a declaration. If our declaration is a community where children are supported and safe, then we begin to live in such a way that safety and support become the topic of conversation, and eventually the way of life. We begin to live into that new possibility.

In the Juvenile Detention Center a young man asked about receiving his First Communion. It began as a simple question: Was it possible? I said, sure it's possible. From that declaration about the possibility of receiving First Communion and Confirmation—even while locked up—came the celebration of a First Communion and Confirmation in a detention environment.

Family, youth, administrators, staff, volunteers all gathered with Angel P. and our local bishop to take part in the sacrament. In that place, the possibility became the reality. Today staff, youth and administrators are talking about possibilities instead of the problems. Bishop Alberto Rojas carries with him the possibility of making our faith come alive even in the most desperate and isolated places.

Let us continue to make bold and provocative statements. The prophets of old didn't just make pronouncements, they spoke of the possibilities. Their words came alive because they were willing to risk embracing a new tomorrow—full of possibilities.

The Grace of Community

Fr. Timothy Guthridge, C.P.P.S., Director of Initial Formation

On August 1, I started a new beginning as the Inter-Provincial Director of Initial Formation. Transitions are always a challenge, especially when there is so much to learn, not to mention to do.

I have always seen the role of a Missionary as a person committed to enabling people to encounter God's grace. This is especially important when people are having a harder time seeing the Church as a place to encounter God's grace.

Today's contemporary Church places a lot of emphasis on catechesis and orthodox church teaching. In no way do I wish to depreciate the importance of this, especially after a couple of decades when good catechesis and sound Scripture teaching had been rather light. I entered the Church when the primary teaching was that Jesus loved you and Eucharist was God's "Happy Meal." I remember one theology professor describe the 70s and 80s as the "banners, baubles, and balloons" stage of the Catholic Church.

There is no question that many young people, (for that matter a large number of older people) are not seeing the work, grace, and the love of God in the institutional church and the world in general. Church attendance has been steadily dropping and I expect it to drop even more during the next couple of decades.

The good news is that God is alive and well. People can find God's grace and love if they are willing to open their hearts to it. Here lies the call of the missionary. Through sacrament, through Scripture, through good church teaching, through healthy Church community, and through private and communal prayer, God's grace can and will be encountered.

I am convinced that unless people are able to experience God's grace on a personal and communal level, they will have no reason to participate in God's Church. Homiletic preaching from a pulpit, even if the preaching is good, isn't by itself going to get the job done. The Gospel says Jesus is the truth. If people are going to go to church, people need to personally encounter the presence of Christ in and through the Church. Pope Francis was recently quoted as saying the Church needs to preach Church less and Jesus more. I think the Holy Father is right.



As our community continues to engage in the formation of Missionaries, we look for young men who are willing to be grounded in Christ and whose hearts are open to God's grace. Formation is a transformative process. If one desires to become a Missionary of the Precious Blood, one must be willing to be transformed. One must not only be willing to learn through formal education, but also be willing to be transformed as a human being through God's grace. This is done through prayer of course, but also through much human interaction in our community and in the Church community—as a person who is willing to serve.

Many years ago, when I was part of a Catholic Worker community in St. Louis, a seminarian from Kenrick Seminary came to our house wanting to serve the homeless. I gave him a mop and a bucket and told him to clean our soup kitchen floor. This was not what he had in mind. Through time this seminarian was able to encounter God's grace through serving God's poor through manual labor and through Catholic Worker community life.

God's transforming grace is encountered and engaged through community experience. At Gaspar House House of Initial Formation, we hope to provide a community environment that will enable a candidate to encounter God's grace through prayer, education, and community living. However, with twelve bedrooms, five bathrooms, a kitchen, dining room, and various other rooms, there is also a lot of cleaning to do.

Time Flies

Matthew Keller, Candidate in Special Formation, Chicago, IL

It is said that time flies when you are having fun. In reality, the only time that time can fly is when one throws a clock. However, I would not advise doing this for a couple of reasons: First, depending on the size of the clock, you may end up with an injury, and second, after you throw that clock it will more than likely be broken and will not have much use. The more I think about time and how fast time seems to move, I think I must be having fun. Time seems to be moving fast because of all the activity I am involved in. The morning that I got up to move to Chicago, it seemed as though I just moved to Church of the Resurrection in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Last year, when I wrote in this column, I wrote about my Special Formation assignment—which seemed a bit unfair, because when I wrote the article I had only been there a short time and was getting just settled. I am now privileged to write a reflection on my completed Special Formation assignment.

Some of our missionaries like the idea of getting a blind assignment and others would prefer otherwise. I would describe Church of the Resurrection as being a “one eye open and the other eye closed” assignment. My left eye was open in the sense that I knew that Church of the Resurrection was an African American parish in Cincinnati, Ohio that was formed from four parishes that had recently closed and merged: St. Mark, St. Andrew, St. Martin de Pores, and St. Agnes. I also knew that trusting in God and being with C.P.P.S. members Fr. Dennis Chriszt and Br. Hugh Henderson, all would be fine. My right eye on the other hand was closed, because I did not know exactly what work I would be doing, and being a Caucasian country boy I was not sure how I was going to fit in an urban African American parish?

During my time at Church of the Resurrection I was involved in visiting the sick members of the parish. I would go on my own for some, but most for most of the sick visits I was Br. Hugh’s side-kick. Some said that we made quite a team. Along with visiting the sick I worked in the parish’s two food pantries and soup kitchen. I also helped out with the teen group of the parish. A fourth activity that I was involved with was participating in all the Masses in the parish on the weekend and then greeting people as they left church.

So how did I fit in at Church of the Resurrection?

During Advent, Br. Hugh preached on the message that he already saw Christ present from the window of his office as he looked out in the parking lot and watched volunteers from the food pantry bring food to people’s cars. Fr. Dennis said that Christ was present as the teens delivered Christmas gifts to the homebound of the parish. At Christmas, I heard a preacher share a message about the hidden Christ in a society; everyone in that society treated each person with respect and love because anyone could be the hidden Christ. If there is a group of people that lives this well, it would be the people at the Church of the Resurrection. Not only did they welcome me, but they welcome any guest that comes into their presence, as though they were the hidden Christ.

It is said that God blesses those who trust him. I would have to say this is true. God did bless me during my time at Church of the Resurrection—where everybody is somebody and Jesus is all. It truly was a blessing to have the choir from Church of the Resurrection and many others from the parish at my Temporary Incorporation in August.

We may not be able to control the speed of time. However, we do have control of what we do as time moves. We have the power to touch lives and have our lives touched. We have the power to love and be loved. It for all this and much more that we just thank the Lord for all the blessings we receive.



Renewal Continues

Fr. James Betzen, C.P.P.S., Provincial Councillor

In this article, I would like to share what I believe Vatican II emphasized in the Church. The Council did not change basic teachings or practice of worship. What I believe changed with Vatican II is the emphasis that it brought to the life of the Church. The Catholic Church is both a divine and human institution. With new experiences and understanding, all human institutions have a history of changing what they emphasize. The many changes and events of the 20th century brought about new understandings and also an awareness of the need to change. I believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the Church in the Second Vatican Council. Both the Holy Spirit and new understanding in theology affected what the Council emphasized in its documents and subsequent changes in church life.

The first and most important emphasis that came with Vatican II is in regard to baptism. The call to holiness primarily comes from the sacrament of baptism and thus, is universal to all Catholics. Lay Catholics came to understand that as baptized Christians they were called to live out their baptismal call to be priest, prophet and king. In other words, all Catholics are called to prayer, sharing God's word and pastoral leadership.

Flowing from this emphasis on baptism is the emphasis on participation in church life. Remember how our participation in Eucharist increased when we began to pray and sing in English, the altar was placed between the priest

and congregation, all were encouraged to sing and we received the Precious Blood. Added to this, the laity was called to liturgical ministries of Eucharistic ministers, lectors, cantors and greeters. Laity was called to participate in pastoral councils to advise the pastor in matters of church life. Committees were formed to share the parish mission of worship and spiritual life, social concerns, stewardship, Christian education and evangelization. Laity, especially parents, became more involved in catechesis of children and youth. Laity formed teams in the formation of catechumens and candidates.

Another emphasis is that of community. The sacraments especially reflect community and the need for community in our faith journey. With Vatican II, we began to celebrate baptisms at weekend Mass, and we celebrated communal penance services and anointing services. Hopefully, we have come to understand that sacraments do more than grant individual grace. They build and strengthen the community of Christ

Another emphasis is on formation. Vatican II helped us to understand that we need to do more than educate our children, youth and catechumens in religion. We, the community of faith and parents, need to form our children, youth and catechumens into committed and moral Christian disciples. Formation requires Christian example, invitation to fuller participation and moral support.

Related to formation is the emphasis on internalization of morality. As children, we follow external rules of conduct. As we grow older, we adopt or internalize a code of conduct. With Vatican II, the Church asked us to internalize a Christian moral code. Remember the Lenten rules for fast and abstinence, and meatless Fridays? The teachings of Vatican II asked us to internalize or adopt more meaningful practices of sacrifice and penance. We were challenged to take more responsibility in our moral growth as Christian disciples. We were challenged to practice “weightier matters of religion” such as charity and justice. We were challenged to ask ourselves what good we are not doing that we could do.

Another emphasis of Vatican II is the Word of God. We Catholics have always had the Word of God but with Vatican II we were encouraged to read and study the Word. We can see the hunger for God’s Word in the many Bible study groups, in the many books, pamphlets and Internet sites to learn about scripture, and in the desire to hear good homilies explaining the Word.

Another emphasis that I think came with Vatican II is dialogue. I believe that dialogue between two parties helps each to come to a better understanding of the truth. Pope John XXIII led the Church in dialogue with groups within the Church and with other peoples and religions. The Church’s dialogue with others, within and outside the Church, helped us to better appreciate God’s truth and holiness.

An effect of the new life in the Church was the flourishing of lay spiritualities. Our post-Vatican II Church has been blessed with laity involved in Marriage Encounter, Cursillo and Charismatic Renewal. In our parishes, we have small communities or base communities, Bible study groups and lay adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Our Companions are a good example of lay spirituality. We recognize that our lay companions share with us incorporated members the charisms of reconciliation, renewal and reaching out to the poor and marginalized.

When I think about the many aspects that Vatican II emphasized in church life, I know that we have much more work to do. Many of these aspects Christ emphasized in his life, and left his followers to carry on his mission. The renewal of Vatican II continues because it is based on the Gospel of Christ that has always called us to renewal.

Get in the Pool, continued from page 12

A key point is that we shouldn’t convince teens they should believe, we should convince them we believe, and she also observes: “We talk our way toward belief; if we can’t talk about it, we probably don’t believe it.” Then she rejects notions that Moralistic Therapeutic Deism can only can be confronted with religious bigotry (triumphalism) and rigid formulas of belief; being grounded on the core example of Jesus’ life and teachings will take us all deeper in faith, and we don’t need to hide the difficulties of scripture and faith from our kids as they grow. The process of confronting them is a means to grow in faith. The Gospel has power when unleashed, and we don’t need to make it a path to an easy life to be acceptable.

As I got to the end of the book, I wondered about another metaphor: how often do we drop kids off at the pool and leave them? We hire Youth Ministers and others, expecting they’ll do everything for us. If we have hospitality ministers, we tend to let them make people welcome and go into our sacred cocoon, irritated if we’re disturbed. Delegating leadership in ministry is necessary for a healthy community, but withdrawing after is a path to trouble. It takes a whole Church to form Christians of every age. We all need to get in the pool together.

We proclaim the Gospel, the wondrous power of Christ’s Blood, with what we do as well as what we say. In connecting with anyone, young or old, we need to plumb the depths of our Faith, make it part of our lives and go forward openly as witness to the One who Redeemed us. Evangelization is about being open and real with who we are as Christians: if the fire truly burns in us, it will burn in others. Seeing how we are with any age group, young or old, can be a great challenge for self-examination, to see how well we are living our faith and sharing our lives authentically.

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Commentary

Get in the Pool

Fr. Keith Branson, C.P.P.S., Chaplain at Avila University, Kansas City, MO

I found an excellent book about Church this past summer: *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Teenagers is Telling the American Church* by Kenda Creasy Dean. The author is a campus chaplain, a seminary professor, and the mother of two young adults.

Her work indicates that teenagers and young adults in today's Churches are products of our faith: not the faith we hold ourselves, but the faith they've seen us practice. She believes many of us really subscribe and practice a parasite faith called Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. The term itself has been criticized, but these main points seem to reflect how a lot of folks believe:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over life on Earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God isn't involved with my life except when I need God to solve a problem.
5. Good people go to Heaven.

None of these points are terribly wrong, although 3 and 4 are a bit problematic. The main issue she has is that this is not a faith that transforms or even provokes deep self-reflection, and it's not a faith people would be terribly motivated to die for. It's easy to accept, helps one get along and survive in our culture today, and easily abandoned when we're distracted by other priorities. Her deduction is that most young adults have walked away from church because this isn't really a faith, but a means of co-existence. People are tending walk away indifferently from the superficial, rather than frustration or anger at church for some reason.

The main image in this belief is that God is a lifeguard, a protector who doesn't get in the pool unless there's an emergency. A better image for most of us—and one to use as persuasion for a deeper encounter—is that God is a swimming teacher: a swimming teacher we keep visiting regularly after we've learned the basics, who helps us survive dangerous waters and help others swim, who forms us to be master swimmers who are virtually drown-proofed.

There's a lot of good reflection throughout the book on the nature of authentic faith and authentic witness of faith.

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