

THE **New Wine** PRESS



Volume 24 No. 2 • October 2015

Our Unique Attractiveness, and Our Challenge

Questions for the Next 200 Years

A Movement of the Spirit

Kansas City Province History Series

No Turning Back

Advocating for Violence-reducing Legislation

A SIOGASPARI
NEI GURBEE



Creating Effective Policies to Prevent Gun Violence

October 17, 2015

**St. James Church
3909 Harrison Street
Kansas City, MO 64110**

9am to 3pm
Luncheon included

Contact: Br. Daryl Charron, C.P.P.S.,
daryl.charron@yahoo.com or 816-835-0344

Mr. DeMarco will discuss effective policies which keep guns out of the wrong hands and save lives and how faith leaders are helping to make these policies a reality. He will discuss the history of Faiths United To Prevent Gun Violence, a coalition of over fifty national faith denominations and organizations which has been working since 2010 to promote effective gun violence prevention policies at the national and state level. He will focus on the success that faith leaders had in helping to enact the landmark Firearms Safety Act of 2013 in Maryland which is doing much to save lives from gun violence in that state. He will discuss the key provisions of that law, particularly requiring fingerprint licensing for handgun purchasers, and talk about how faith leaders can help to promote these life-saving measures across the country.

Vincent DeMarco is the President of the Maryland Citizen's Health Initiative, a coalition of over 1000 organizations seeking to insure quality, affordable health care for all Marylanders. The Initiative was the lead organization working for the Governor's Working Families and Small Business Health Care Coverage Act of 2007 which expanded health care to over 100,000 uninsured Marylanders. He is also the National Coordinator of Faiths United To Prevent Gun Violence and President of Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence, which was the lead organization advocating for Maryland's landmark gun violence prevention law enacted in 2013.



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



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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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We Are the World

by Fr. Keith Branson, C.P.P.S., Publications Editor

On the night of January 28, 1985, a collection of famous musicians came to the A&M Recording Studio in Los Angeles after the American Music Awards ceremony. They included Ray Charles, Bob Dylan, Billy Joel, Diana Ross, Willie Nelson, Cyndi Lauper, Bruce Springsteen, and Smokey Robinson, among others. Their purpose: record a song written by Lionel Richie and Michael Jackson for the charity group United Support of Artists for Africa titled “We Are the World.” The session started around 10:30 PM and lasted until 8 AM the next morning, and resulted in a record that raised tens of millions to help starving people in Africa.

How did they do it? Producer Quincy Jones ran a tight ship; the artists were greeted with a note on the door that read: “Check your egos at the door.”

Humility was a topic Gaspar wrote about often. He wrote to Fr. Antonio Loffreda in 1826: “However, to guard and to increase the holy gifts granted to us by God, let us not cease, my dearest in Jesus Christ, to ground ourselves in holy humility. This virtue is the basis for every good work, the source of every heavenly blessing and the ladder to heaven. We are worth something only because of the aggregate of God’s gifts given to us...God wants us to cultivate those gifts that he has given to us. So, continue to advance both in your spiritual life as well as in your acquisition of knowledge, since we, as priests, must be *lux mundi et sal terrae* (Light of the World and Salt of the Earth)...(#1206)” There are hints in his correspondence of inflated egos clashing, and it’s apparent they took a lot out of him. His response was frequently to remind his correspondents and his community of virtue of humility, and how it was a starting point for great things in the mission of the Church.

Inflated ego is a devious operator—as a musician I’ve encountered it often. We need to have a healthy sense of self-worth, confidence in our gifts, poise under pressure to hit the right notes at the right time or sing in tune while listening to others. Yet all this can pump us up too much, make us overly concerned about our personal preferences, tempt us to think that what’s best for me is best for everybody even if we aren’t running for President. It can make it difficult for us to collaborate with anyone on anything. It can focus us too much on our little songs without finding the colossal hymn we could all be part of. The antidote for inflated ego is Gaspar’s Humility.

USA for Africa raised over \$68 million since its release in 1985, most of it going to Africa in both short-term aid and long-term training programs (part of it stayed in the United States, helping our poor.) It’s not the best song ever written, didn’t get at the causes of famine around the world, and it rarely gets played today. But a group of people spending one night together was able to check their egos at the door, and they accomplished quite a bit. What we can do together can make a difference no matter how much time we’re able to put into it. They did it in one night; we have more time at our disposal than that, surely. It’s about

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Whatever Will Be Will Be

by Fr. Tom Welk, C.P.P.S., Provincial Councilor

“Que será, será/Whatever will be, will be/The future’s not ours to see/Que será, será/What will be, will be.” Those who were around in the ’50s will immediately recognize these words from a song made popular by Doris Day. The song’s lyrics were slanted to discourage the tendency to engage in undue worrying about the future. To some extent it is true that “whatever will be, will be.” But does that mean we are to be totally passive about doing anything today to determine what tomorrow will bring?

St. Maria de Mattias provided another avenue for us to deal with our concern for the unknown-future. This is summed up in her “Providence of God” prayer:

Providence of God,
providence of the eternal, almighty and merciful God,
providence that has provided,
still provides,
and always will provide,
provide also for us,
Most Holy Triune God,
in all our common and private necessities.
So I believe,
so I hope,
so it shall always be.
May your holy will be done
in everything. Amen.

From our youngest days we have been told “not to worry,” but to trust in the Providence of God. As St. Maria advises, God will provide and protect us.

But this advice can also be misunderstood; divine providence could be seen as some sort of Star Wars shield, protecting us from any and all harm.

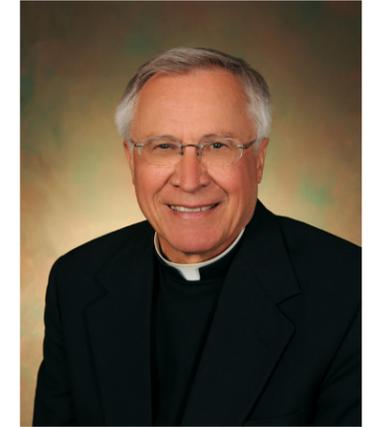
Is that what Maria means when she tells us to trust in divine providence? I don’t think so. Because, unfortunately, when harm does come along, disillusionment and distrust set in. Where was this impenetrable divine shield when it was needed?

Looking at the word providence in its Latin form (*providere*, to see ahead) gives us a better understanding. Many of us don’t see too far ahead. We need light in order to see. More often than not we operate with a very narrowly focused laser-beam light. A laser beam does not illuminate much of reality. It can even lead to a distorted perception of reality. To quote another song sung by Peggy Lee, “Is that all there is?”

However, a floodlight enables us to get a much bigger view. This kind of light makes it possible “to see ahead.” We are often laser-people; God operates with a floodlight. When seen in a wider perspective, a limited painful moment can be seen as making possible a greater blessing down the road. To see this requires a broader vision.

What about our future as religious community? How and what do we see? Looking at our present reality with a laser beam can lead to discouragement.

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A Call to Life

by Kathy Keary, *Companions Co-director*

Experiencing a sense of oneness with God in nature is a communion that penetrates the soul. I think many of us have experienced a deep sense of the divine when walking in the country, taking in all that nature offers, admiring trees gracing the sky at sunset, being awed by the sun easing its way into the sea, the creative design and vast variety of flowers, and the list goes on and on. I now savor these moments as sacred, but I can remember as a child being edified by creation without really being aware I was encountering the divine. I couldn't name the experience, but it was very real, filling me with an inner wholeness and peace. This says to me that there is something innate about being drawn into the divine by creation.

As I reflect on October as Respect Life month, the feast days of two great saints come to mind: St. Francis of Assisi on October 4, and St. Gaspar del Bufalo on October 21. In Pope Francis' recent encyclical, he

describes St. Francis as a "mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself." This sense of interconnectedness, which St. Francis embodied, was a fruit of a growing relationship with God. As he grew in communion with his Maker, his bond with all of creation was intensified. He held sacred every detail of the works of God's hands.

St. Gaspar preached a message of reconciliation: a call to right relationship with God, with one another, and all of creation. This responsibility includes being in right relationship with all of humanity. As Precious Blood people, our ears are open to the cry of the blood that screams throughout our world. Our spirituality propels the community into a variety of ministries as we respond to needs near and far.

Pope Francis devotes an entire chapter of *Laudato Si'* (On Care for our Common Home) citing examples

in Scripture that evidence God's intention that his people be in harmony with Him and all of His creation, including our universal brothers and sisters and the earth itself. He points out that a slight in any of these areas is a disregard to the other areas. For instance, when we fail to protect the environment, we are neglecting our relationship with God and those with whom we share this planet.

Our common home screams of the outright unbounded love of our Creator and is an ongoing divine revelation. In the words of Pope Francis, "Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God." The New Testament is full of references demonstrating Jesus' oneness with nature. "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey?" "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."

Often, concern about the environment is viewed as a figment of the imagination. It is a lot easier to jump to that conclusion than to do the difficult interior work of discerning how one's lifestyle is not congruent with a reverence for all of life and making the necessary adjustments. But this is not a new issue. This same theme was central in St. Patrick's message dating back to the 5th Century. An awareness of the sacredness of creation and the interconnectedness among God, his people and his created world was central in his preaching.

Pope Francis makes a connection between St. Therese of Lisieux's message to practice the little way of love to what is required of us today. He points out the need for all people to be responsible by engaging in simple daily acts that defy a common tendency to violence, exploitation, and selfishness. He invites us to widen the scope of our concern to include all people and to accept that our lifestyles affect God's people, particularly the least among us. He makes it very clear that the environmental crisis is a very real issue that threatens life. As people of reconciliation, justice, and peace, our spirituality beckons us to pay heed to his words. ♦

Editor's Notes, continued from page 2

getting started, about leaving our personal awards show and showing up for work. What is important is to read the sign outside the studio, and check our egos at the door. ♦

Leadership, continued from page 2

Numbers are declining; "We have no future!" can easily be the conclusion we draw. Indeed, is the present difficult reality all there is? Or is there a deeper reality; are there greater possibilities for us to consider? Can we trust in the Providence of God, who sees a much bigger picture, to guide us?

There is no doubt that changes in focus and structure as a religious community await us. What will those new structures look like? None of us has an absolute answer to that question. What is certain is that we are at present in an in-between time. Being caught in-between is not a comfortable position. It is difficult to determine which way to go; being in-between can lead to paralysis. This is similar to the scenario posed by the 14th Century French philosopher Jean Buridan, who posited that if an ass were placed exactly midway between a pail of water and a stack of hay it would die of both hunger and thirst, since it could not decide which way to go, being pulled equally in both directions.

In-between time is also called "in the meantime." Being called a mean person is not a compliment. The word "mean" can also refer to something painful. In-between times can be difficult.

As a Community we find ourselves in-between from what we have been; what we are presently; and what we will be in the future. Are we so caught between the past and the future that we have allowed ourselves to be paralyzed in the present?

Believing in divine providence can motivate us to do some moving. Belief in God's Providence was a key element of Maria's faith. But it was not a belief that made her fatalistic. To some extent, what will be will be; and what will be will be good if we have done our part in visioning the big picture and working to make that vision a reality.

The gathering we have scheduled at the Marillac Center for January 25-27, 2016 will provide us an opportunity to engage in some floodlight visioning. As I mentioned previously, we know where we have been and where we are right now. Can we trust in God's divine providence and the gift of God's wisdom to guide us to where we need to go? To some extent we can determine "what will be." In looking to the future, can we echo the faith of Maria, "May your holy will be done in everything?" ♦



Our Unique Attractiveness, and Our Challenge

by Fr. Patrick Patterson, C.P.P.S., Cincinnati Province

This article appeared in the **Forum** section of the September issue of the **C.P.P.S. Newsletter** of the Cincinnati Province. The question the author raises is

relevant to our ongoing discernment as well, and all are invited to respond to it in print.

I understand once we return to our regular district meetings this fall, one of the topics up for discussion will be a continuation of our assembly's presentations concerning our vocation discernment and our formation programs. In the presentations of these topics at the assembly, there were a couple of basic ideas that caught my attention and which I feel should be developed, namely:

- 1) Concerning discernment, what is the unique attractiveness that we offer? What is it about us specifically that would encourage someone to join us rather than another organization?
- 2) Concerning formation, what is the specific challenge that we offer, recognizing that many young people today are actually looking for, hungry for, and willing to respond to a challenge?
- 3) In responding to these two inquiries, I suggest a third question: As Missionaries of the Precious Blood, how do we, or how are we, living out and/ or giving testimony to these two realities, i.e., attractiveness and challenge, in our own personal as well as our communal lives?

To me, these two points, unique attractiveness and specific challenge, are essential to our continued existence. If no one finds us attractive, if no one responds to our challenge—then we are dead.

To me, the selling point is testimony. Here is a problem as our Community becomes smaller. How are possible candidates going to know us and therefore

be attracted to us, if they cannot see and know us in a broader vision?

For example, a candidate might be attracted to us because of our focus on reconciliation—but may see that only at our Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation in the Back of the Yards neighborhood in Chicago. “I don’t see it anywhere else,” he might say. But is he fully aware that so many of our men, in so many ways, patch things up, big and small, day after day?

Others might be captured by our title as Missionaries, by our service to the marginalized in foreign lands. But they may be unaware of our outreach here in the U.S., for example, to the migrants and their families at St. Agnes Parish in Los Angeles or at St. James the Less Parish in Columbus. Others might be drawn to the bond of charity, and so on.

In other words, how are we to introduce our candidates in short order to our rather vast home missionary activities, or to our constant focus on reconciliation in multiple settings, or to the different ways in which we live out the bond of charity?

And so I return to the original concern: what is the unique attractiveness that we offer, and what is the specific challenge that we offer, and how do we, as individuals as well as in our communal groupings, give testimony to who we are and why someone would want to join us?

It seems to me that there are a number of reasons that someone might find us attractive. We are in fact a young congregation, neither religious nor secular, in other words, a group of men—priests and brothers—who freely take on an agreement to share a common life in charity, willing to go where the Church has need for us. For the most part, these are not our commitments today. Today our commitments, because of a reduction of active priests, are extremely limited.

However, I am willing to return again to another most serious matter regarding our future. Are we attractive? And what challenge do we offer? And will possible candidates actually see these qualities in us? Enough to respond? ♦



Ryan Cornelissen, second from left, with participants from Catholics on Call

Catholics on Call Conference: A Reflection

by Ryan Cornelissen, Precious Blood Volunteers Alum

Most twenty-somethings working in engineering wouldn’t dream of leaving job security in search of a job in ecclesial ministry with lower pay and lower status. Fortunately (or unfortunately), I am not like most of my peers. As I arrived home in New Hampshire after my year of service with Precious Blood Volunteers, I faced the reality of financial responsibilities; unfortunately I cannot be a volunteer forever! My year in Kansas City left me inspired, hopeful and confused when faced with the question, “So...what next?” Numerous resumes and several promising but unsuccessful interviews later, I still didn’t have a job or any sort of plan set for my return to New Hampshire.

Amidst the questions and confusion, Tim Deveney, Director of Precious Blood Volunteers, recommended I apply to attend an upcoming conference: Catholics on Call. Knowing nothing about the event, I did a bit of investigative work to find out more. Catholics on Call is a gathering of young adults ranging from early twenties to mid thirties who are eager to serve the Lord with their lives, but don’t quite know how to do so. As I scrolled through the website I thought, “That’s me!” The conference provides a safe environment for people to further explore vocations to religious, ordained and ecclesial ministry within the Church. If nothing else, the scenic waterfront location of the conference at Catholic Theological Union, nestled in

the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, would make the week worth the trip.

Although the community of young adults at the conference provided comfort in the often difficult world of vocational discernment, the biggest blessing of the week was setting apart time for God and me. From the first note bowed by the cellist at Evening Prayer, I was overwhelmed by my need to let God still the restless waters within me and to let Him enter into my boat. The conference was an opportunity to step back from the wants and demands of friends, family and coworkers, and instead reflect on the wants and nudges from God. I found myself wrapped up in the particulars of the “right job” instead of where I felt called in my heart. One of the most common (but daunting) questions that the presenters dwelled on was, “What is your heart’s deepest desire?” Not, “What do you think God wants you to do?” or “What skills can you use to best help others?” (two important questions by the way), but rather, “What is your heart’s deepest desire?”

The conference did not bring the answer of that question to me, but it did bring me to the heart of the question. I was searching for my vocation in all the wrong ways and places. I feel refreshed, reassured and ready to continue to search for where God wants me to be and am ready to do the best I can each day along the way. Thank you to everyone in the Precious Blood Community who have helped and supported me over the past year. I am so blessed to know you. ♦



Kansas City Province Copanions at the 2015 Electoral Assembly

A Movement of the Spirit

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

In the May 25, 1986 issue of the *Kansas City Province Newsletter*, Fr. Thomas Albers, C.P.P.S. penned a reflection on the possibility of lay associate membership for the community. This idea had been discussed for some time in the province. He wrote, “Already many communities of religious women, including the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, have established associate memberships with a view to including the laity in the development of their charism.” He acknowledged the “notion is not new in the Church,” pointing to religious congregations with Third Orders, or in the community, citing the Pious Union as having “something of the characteristic of a Third Order.” Seeing the potential, he went on to say: “Both our Society and the laity would benefit greatly from an associate membership modeled on true collaboration.” Several models for associate membership were presented and the Province was invited to dialogue.

In a series of articles in subsequent newsletters, Fr. Albers addressed various questions and challenges

in establishing an associate membership in the congregation. In his third article (August 25, 1986), he asked, “Is it the right timing for us to even consider the possibility of associate membership? Is there not a prior agenda for us as a Province? My guess is that the time is not ripe for associate members, except perhaps for research into it and some framework for discussion about it.”

Less than two years later in 1988, Fr. Albers was Provincial, and the Provincial Council moved on the idea of inviting lay people who share our spirituality into covenant with the Community. At the Council meeting in San Angelo, Texas on January 13, 1988, I presented an outline for a process to develop a lay associate membership. At the time, I was studying at St. Louis University Institute of Religious Formation to redesign the Provincial policies for vocation and formation ministry. As part of this project, I included a chapter on developing an associate membership movement that would be called Precious Blood

Companions. According to the minutes of the meeting, the Council enthusiastically received the proposal.

The enthusiastic response of the Council was echoed throughout the Province. On February 5, 1989, I spoke to about 50 lay people from Precious Blood parishes in the San Angelo diocese who were invited to learn about our idea. We called Companions a *movement* rather than a program, because it reflected the movement of the Spirit in the Church since Vatican II of community, collaboration, collegiality, and ministry rooted in baptism rather than ordination. In reflecting on the motivation and meaning of Companions, I wrote at the time, “Companions are those who would like to share mutually through the Bond of Charity in the spiritual and apostolic life of the Precious Blood.”

From the beginning, the Kansas City Province worked with the Cincinnati Province in developing the concept of the Companion movement. On January 20, 1989, eight members of the Cincinnati Province met at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago to explore the possibility of establishing associate membership in their province. At the meeting, they proposed “the adoption of the term ‘Companion’ in union with the Kansas City Province” and “the laity who will be involved in beginning our associate program will assist us in further defining it.”

The Kansas City Provincial Assembly formally and officially endorsed the Companion movement in 1989. “Companions,” Fr. Albers wrote, “proved to be a major factor in reassessing our identity.” The first Companions groups were introduced in our parishes in Linton, North Dakota, and San Angelo, Texas. Soon after, groups formed in parishes in St. Joseph and Liberty, Missouri and Centerville, Iowa.

For more than twenty years, the directors of Companions were Incorporated Members—Fr. William Nordenbrock, Fr. Dennis Kinderman, Fr. David Matz, and Br. Nick Renner—with a Companion serving as

co-director in each province. For more than twelve years, Marie Trout was the co-director of Companions for the Kansas City Province.

In 2010, the Vision 2020 Task Force was formed, including Incorporated Members and Companions from both the Cincinnati and Kansas City Provinces, to evaluate, discern, and envision the future of the Companion movement. In 2011, the Provincial Councils of Kansas City and Cincinnati accepted the task force recommendation that it was time for a Companion to be director of the movement. Companion Phillis Fuller-Clippis of Cleveland was chosen to be the first lay director in 2012. The Companion Leadership Team also included Companions Marie Trout (Kansas City) and Debbie O’Malley (Cincinnati), but after several months, Marie and Debbie came to the realization they would not be able to serve the Companion movement in the way they envisioned and resigned. They were not replaced.

In the summer of 2013, Phillis Fuller-Clippis also resigned, and Fr. Dave Matz was asked by the Provincial Councils of Kansas City and Cincinnati to serve as interim director.

Engaging Companions and Incorporated Members in a process of Appreciative Discernment, Fr. Matz and the Companions Council put together a vision statement, *Gather, Send* and proposed a leadership model that included two full-time Companions as co-directors and a Incorporated Member to serve part-time as associate director. The leadership team would work in collaboration with the Companions Council, which changed from an advisory board to an oversight board. A committee consisting of Fr. Matz and Companions Rita McNally and Pat Large reviewed the resumes of those who applied for the positions and interviewed potential candidates to fill the co-directors’ position.

Upon the recommendation of the Companions Council, the Provincial Councils of the Cincinnati and Kansas City Provinces approved the appointment of Companions Kathy Keary and Victoria Otto as the new co-directors of the Companion movement. They began their service to the Community on November 1, 2014. Fr. John Wolf was appointed associate director effective October 1, 2015. ♦

Next Month: The Vietnam Mission

Planting Seeds

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

Joe recently moved into Mercy Boys and Girls Home, a Catholic sponsored home for young men and women. It has all the makings of being what he needs to help realize some of his dreams—being a college graduate and looking out for his family. Nigel has an opportunity to take part in a program that may very well be a game-changer—taking part in a three-month excursion (if it happens, that will be a *New Creation* column in itself) on a 65-foot sailboat. Kendall is playing football for St. Laurence, a Catholic high school.

These are a few of the youth trying to change the trajectory of their lives. Statistically, they are a lost cause: incarcerated at a young age, older siblings in prison and jail, families that are overwhelmed and barely making it from day to day. But statistics don't tell the whole story.

I could go on and on about those we have lost to incarceration and death—there are many. But so are the ones that continue to try, even in the midst of so much pain and disappointment.

Earlier this month, I went to the local high school to see if I could enroll a young man who would be getting out of detention. I told the principal that on paper, he is not going to look good. I knew the principal had to think about numbers: grades, scores on standardized tests, graduation, etc. I said I couldn't guarantee that he'd be a good student, but that I would be a phone call away. The principal smiled and said, "Yeah, I know the kind of kids you work with." He agreed to give Jamal a chance.

Research tells us that one caring adult in the life of youth can make a real difference. A great deal of failure (and violence) happens when young people feel like their lives will end in a cul-de-sac. At the core of all our programming is that youth know that we are in it for the long haul. We are working to ensure that each of the youth has that caring adult—and, hopefully, a caring community.

When young people feel like they are not worthy, or can't imagine that they will live to see their 21st birthday, then they stop dreaming. If a caring adult can change that, what would happen if there was a community of caring adults?

Jonathan is a young man who works here at the Center. He works full time and goes to college part

time. He'll be the first to tell you it is a real struggle. He has a young son to support, and additionally has to help his mother with his younger brothers and sisters. But in the midst of his struggles, he continues to try. He doesn't give up. More than once I have heard kids say how much they respect Jonathan, not because he's successful or has a great car, but because he continues to try. Jonathan isn't just a story, or a statistic. He grew up here in the neighborhood and is an example of the youth trying to keep their dream alive. He'll be the first to admit that he needed and continues to need support from others. One caring adult can mean a lot to a youth who is trying to find his way through life.

So yes, there are many disappointments; there are times when I get frustrated. But I am reminded often of how privileged we are to be a part of their lives.

When Pope Francis comes to the United States, he'll continue his tradition of visiting those who are on the margins: he will visit a detention center. Pope Francis, an ambassador of reconciliation, is tearing down the walls of separation and building a longer table of hospitality.

Stay tuned for the next *New Creation* column on the adventures of Nigel as he sets sail. ♦



Nigel, who is hoping to take part in a three-month sailing expedition.

No Turning Back

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

There is a miracle attributed to St. Gaspar in the small city of Todi in the region of Umbria in central Italy. A landlord shot at him at point blank range because Gaspar would not reveal what one of his stewards said in confession. The bullet fell harmlessly at his feet. Another miracle where he narrowly escaped a violent death was in Forlimpopoli, a small city in northeastern Italy. An assassin had been sent to kill him, yet as he raised the knife to drive into Gaspar's heart, he felt a mysterious force immobilize his arm and the knife dropped at Gaspar's feet. The hired killer fell to his knees and wept before Gaspar.

St. Gaspar experienced and tried to understand the violence surrounding him during the turbulent times of his day. We can learn several lessons from him as we work towards nonviolent means of intervention in the midst of our violent society of the 21st century. Mario Spinelli, an accomplished journalist and teacher of literature, was commissioned by the Italian Province to write a biography: *No Turning Back—The Life of Gaspar del Bufalo*. He talks about the confrontation with the dramatic and complex reality of brigandage Gaspar and his missionaries ministered in. These are choices for the disinherited, the degraded and condemned in order to redeem them by a hard and contested struggle to benefit the whole of society. I believe he aspired to confront the violence of his day in order to seek peace for the common good.

St. Gaspar ministered to draft evaders and common criminals who were displaced people. Brutalized and hardened by the unsettled life in the mountains, they made crime their only means of sustenance. They terrorized people with robbery, blackmail, murders, rapes, kidnappings and every other type of violence and threat. Their harmful careers had a ripple effect on international public opinion enraged by the phenomenon of banditry in Lazio, Italy. How did Gaspar and his missionaries deal with such an enemy? Brigandage was quite hard and difficult to oppose. Gaspar was able to identify the fact that hardly anyone accounted for the social causes of brigandage: ignorance, misery, economic inequality, unemployment, and lack of productivity by the large land owners, who wielded great power in the area. As a consequence, no one was trying to uproot the culture that nourished organized crime. It was a culture founded on selfishness and

distrust towards the representatives of the government and official justice.

The inefficiency of the bureaucrats and the disturbing background of the brigands' violence, fear, blood were critical parts of Gaspar's understanding as he devised a plan to deal with it. He had seen that what was being done was contrary of what he considered just. On the basis of this experience and with the Gospel in his hand, he intervened in order to erase crime and save those unfortunate people who were substantially innocent and in need of constructive assistance. Gaspar, with the help of his missionaries, started to work with this brigand culture by eradicating ignorance and illiteracy, aiming at economic and social development. They accomplished this through teaching and pastoral involvement as well as advocating for just laws and upright magistrates. He and his missionaries lived there in solidarity with the bandits and dedicated themselves to the re-evangelization of those who are oppressed by giving witness of a lived faith and concrete support for the suffering.

At the heart of St. Gaspar's motivation to care for the bandits was compassion. Looking them in the eye, he saw much weariness, desperation and marginalization. Gaspar invited them to reform themselves with practical and effective counsels about how to regain hope. He suggested how they could end crime, rehabilitate themselves, and count on a clean future. The brigands received the discourse of Gaspar attentively and respectfully; no one touched a hair of his head or that of his missionaries. St. Gaspar and his nonviolent approach can truly inspire us with the bandits, through teaching, preaching and pastoral involvement anchored with gospel values and witness of a lived faith.

Gaspar can inspire us as we deal with the brigandage and violence of our day. We also struggle with bureaucratic inefficiency and their inability to address economic inequality and unemployment, not to mention re-distributing power away from the wealthy elite. We can work at eradicating ignorance by aiming at economic and social development as we read the signs of our times, advocating for just laws and upright magistrates through involvement in social justice lobbying. Economic inequality breeds violence; Gaspar saw that in his day and we see it in ours. What are the social causes of the gun violence that we have seen so

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In Awe of Mercy

by Gerry Downs, Sonoma, California Companion

“Let us pray to God for each thing for He is a good Father. May it please His mercy to cleanse here below every bit of bitterness for the sake of those objectives which we always adore, and may they all bring us to maturity for our fatherland in heaven...” (Gaspar del Bufalo to Monsignor Giuseppe Costantini, Feb 5, 1831, #2131).

It all began with a crushing headache! I almost never get headaches, but this one came on gradually over a period of days. Nothing I took for it seemed to help, and even my eyes ached! Finally, I could ignore it no longer. I called a friend to take me to the emergency room and I think before I hung up the phone, she and her husband were at my door.

I was ushered into the examining room and within minutes of taking the usual temperature and blood pressure, the doctor prescribed medication for the headache and also ordered several scans of various parts of my body. When those were accomplished and a preliminary diagnoses made, I was taken by ambulance to the HMO Hospital.

The next day, I was subjected to more tests, scans and a biopsy, resulting in the diagnosis: cancer. Not a welcome diagnosis, but one to be seriously reckoned with, involving brain, heart and tear ducts. The outcome of the discussions with the doctors was that surgery was needed.

With much confidence in the love and mercy of God, and with the prayers of my friends at my parish and those of the Precious Blood Community, I had the successful surgical procedure to remove my cancerous pancreas a few weeks before Christmas, and after 10 days in hospital, I was able to return home, with much new medication taking the place of the functions of that organ. After the holidays, I began a series of radiation and chemotherapy treatments that lasted six weeks. Each day, a different one of the parishioners of my parish came to pick me up and make sure I got to the treatment. I am ever grateful to each one of them. Within a few days of the ending of the treatments, I became so ill that I had to return to the hospital, and remained there for the next three weeks.

Being confined gave me the time to appreciate the comfort of prayer, the sacrifice that Jesus made by shedding his Precious Blood for all of us, but especially for me. I used the time to pray, to thank God for the gift of life, and time to praise God's goodness and power. I am totally convinced that the power of prayer is the reason I am still here. I came to know, in a new

way, that we are called to pray for ourselves and to ask for mercy for ourselves—and believe me, I did lots of that! I also know that the prayers of so many wonderful people were heard and they are the reason I am still breathing. Since the surgery, people who hear for the first time that I had pancreatic cancer tell me, “But you can't live without a pancreas!” And I just laugh, and say, “Look, here I am, months after the surgery and still upright.”

I was determined to make it to the 200th Anniversary Celebration in Liberty, and by the grace and mercy of God, I was able to do it. It was a wonderful celebration. Trudy Miller, who accompanied me, and I packed cookies, blew up helium balloons, and drove a golf cart from where the buses left folks off, to where the displays, information booths and the food were set up. I still walk with a cane, but that day, I drove the daylights out of that golf cart!

I am so aware of the mercy of God that surrounds me each and every day now. I live in gratitude for my life and in hope of still being of service to my parish

Peace & Justice, continued from p. 11

prevalent in our times? We do not have to be intimidated by one of the strongest lobbies in our nation; the National Rifle Association should not always have the last word. We can advocate for our government to pass laws banning assault weapons while at the same time enforce gun trafficking laws. We can advocate for our government to fund violence prevention programs.

Please come to our final lecture series in celebration of our bicentennial on October 17th. Vincent DeMarco from Faiths United Against Gun Violence will be our speaker at St. James Church in Kansas City. This will be an educational opportunity to learn about nonviolent means to advocate for more gun control in order to lessen gun violence in our society. Remember the landlord shot at Gaspar at point blank range and the bullet fell at his feet: miracles do happen. God empowers us to do our part in making miracles happen. What will be our response?♦



Day of Remembrance

November 1st at 4 p.m.
Precious Blood Center
Liberty, Missouri

Worship Service followed by a simple meal

Register with Br. Daryl Charron, C.P.P.S.
daryl.charron@yahoo.com

Immigration Reform Where Are We Going?



2015-16 Peace & Justice Series

Topics include:

- The history of immigration in the U.S.
- The Church's teaching on immigration
- Points for reform on U.S. policy
-

Contact: Br. Daryl Charron, C.P.P.S.
daryl.charron@yahoo.com

Session One*

November 6

4 - 6:30 p.m.

St. Francis Xavier Parish
St. Joseph, Missouri

November 7

10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Sacred Heart Parish
Sedalia, Missouri

November 8

4 -6:30 p.m.

St. James Parish
Liberty, Missouri

**Session One presentation will be the same at all locations.*

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Is God calling you to a Precious Blood life?



Discernment Retreat

October 23-25, 2015
Precious Blood Center
2130 Saint Gaspar Way
Liberty, MO 64068

For men discerning a vocation as a Precious Blood priest or brother.

Contact Fr. Timothy Armbruster, C.P.P.S.
vocations@kcprovince.org for more information.