

THE New Wine PRESS

Volume 27 No. 1 • September 2018





Let us serve God with holy joy.

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

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Cover photo: Vietnam Mission Annual Meeting

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

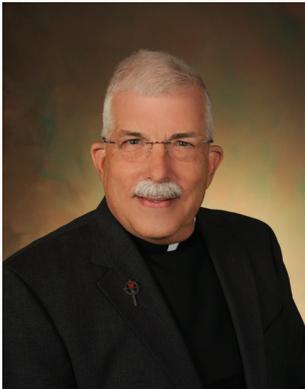
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To Tell the Truth

by Fr. Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S., Vice-provincial Director

In the late 1950s, when I was nearing the end of grade school, two very popular TV programs of the time were “I’ve Got a Secret” (four celebrity panelists try to determine a contestant’s secret, i.e., something that is unusual, amazing, embarrassing or humorous about that person) and “To Tell the Truth” (four celebrity panelists are presented with three contestants and must identify which is the actual person whose unusual occupation or experience has been described by the show’s host). I recall watching and enjoying them both. The memory of both shows endure—only now as reality TV, or rather just reality.

In both our political world and in the church, we are often left to struggle with who is keeping secrets and who is telling the truth (or more often, not telling the truth). Governments and religious institutions are always in need of reform and renewal. Many would maintain that today there is a rot at the core of both our Church and our country. Excuses or explanations being made for immoral and even criminal behavior, lying, obfuscation, misdirection, deception, and cover up. There is a fracturing of sorts happening in both our country and our church, as people take sides and harden positions and opinions, often feeling helpless to effect change or find appropriate ways in which to express a range of intense emotions. Disgust, outrage, sorrow at the damage being done to both the body politic and the Body of Christ.

I’m not going to analyze or critique what is happening politically in our country, just suffice to say that there is sadly a profound dearth of good leadership in our current climate of division. I will rather focus on the Church and the current darkness that we are in.

Thomas Rosica, writing recently in *National Catholic Reporter*, listed some of the many reasons that people are putting forward to explain the sexual abuse scandal. But then he stated: “...there is one glaring word that many avoid speaking: the evil of clericalism that is at the root of the crisis...Until the church at her highest levels names this great evil of clericalism and rids the church of it, we will not move forward.”

Pope Francis has addressed the issue of clericalism often in his homilies and speeches. It seems to be the disease that the Church has everywhere—a kind of systemic disease, which makes it very difficult to eradicate. It is ultimately a mindset, but in practice is often means clergy taking advantage of their positions or roles, using power, feeling entitled to special privileges.

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Choirs of Compassion

by Fr. Keith Branson, C.P.P.S., Avila University Chaplain

Imagining a new creation will call us to see our community and mission in a new way. There are many images we can use to help us envision the new creation, and the one I believe is the most helpful is one from my other profession: a choir. Let me unpack this.

Historically, the warrior image is used for the Church and its members, and this is understandable, particularly given the history of the Middle Ages and the Crusades. It is true that we are called to a soldier's discipline: to endure hardship, to trust leadership completely, and obey orders without question in times of emergency. I do not think this is a helpful metaphor, and it ultimately destroys the Gospel. How do we force others to live lives of hope and compassion? How do we make others see Truth by chaining them to it unwillingly? In our time we have seen the cost of prolonged war too well, with PTSD and family disruptions, and it has almost become impossible to persuade anyone of anything given the verbal war that rules our communications.

In a choir, there are many voices coming together to make music. They are all different, with unique strengths and weaknesses, different ranges and timbres, different levels of volume. Each singer has different gifts, different experiences, different stories, which adds to the uniqueness of their contribution.

There are generally four parts to a choir: soprano, alto, tenor, bass. There can be more or less; at times a section is asked to divide, perhaps all four. Yet there are times they all sing the same line in unison, or two, or three parts. Every part has its role, every part carries the melody from time to time, every part sings accompaniment. Every part rests from time to time, sometime for an entire movement.

But each part has its dignity, each part is essential in making music. At times, there is a counterpoint where each part has a tune that contrasts with the other parts, when together they create something impossible for a solo singer.

Different levels of commitment are also in the choir. There are those new to the choir, and those who

have been there a long time. Some will work hard every day practicing to improve themselves and contribute more to the choir, others will only sing when the group is together (this is the reality, although every choir director wants their choir members to practice on their own). There are professionals with the choir: the conductor, the accompanist, at times section leaders are paid. They contribute to the sound and help organize it, but they are not the choir, they don't make music by themselves.

Truth truly needs no defenders; it remains in spite of any attack and can never be undone by force of lies and deception. Truth endures everything. We do not build a community of truth and justice by conquest, but by conversion. Ancient Christianity did not conquer the Roman Empire, it converted it. They brought the empire into their great song of God's creation.

All put aside their own temptation to dominate the sound for the sake of the whole, for the sake of the music. Even though there are solos from time to time, the purpose is not to show off the individual, but provide something unique that takes the music to a higher level. Once a solo is done, they return to the section, become an equal part of the choir again.

To say we are a choir of compassion is a better metaphor I wish to offer. It requires discipline and work, patience and perception, an ability to listen deeply and blend our voices with others to create something we could not create on our own. We are called to live lives in harmony with each other, and the harmony we are living is God's harmony. The music we offer is for to heal of the world, to open a greater reality that calls all of us to be part of it, The Song of Christ's Blood is the song we sing: Christ is our conductor who guides us in our musical journey, and our song is the restoration of Eden, the completion of God's perfect harmony of the universe. ✠



Members of the vietnam Mission. All images are from the Annual Meeting on August 13th.

Summertime Ministries in Vietnam

by Br. Daryl Charron, c.p.p.s., Vietnam Mission Director

August has been a busy month for the Vietnam Mission. The beginning of the month marked the conclusion of Summer Ministries for our candidates in formation. Pledged candidate Dung Nguyen and Initial Formation candidate Tinh Cao spent the summer in our rural ministry at Tan Thanh Mission. The two of them joined our members there to continue the renovation and development of our properties there. One could probably call both Dung and Tinh “Jacks of all trades.” They have done electrical and building construction before in their previous working experience. Gardening was also something they were well familiar with previously. These skills came in handy as they went about improving the buildings and grounds of Tan Thanh Mission.

Dung and Tinh enjoyed working the land, making a compost hole, planting grass and plants, and laying a paved street in front of our property. They also helped our neighbors, The Le San Sisters, make a new

house on their property. In addition to all this work on buildings and grounds, Dung and Tinh found time for teaching and visiting shut-ins from the local parish. They struggled in the transition of having a new pastor at the parish and witnessing many parishioners not accepting the change in pastors. Reconciliation was definitely something they worked at throughout the summer as they stood in solidarity with the parishioners in their time of need. Their hearts went out to them, and both Dung and Tinh felt powerless in being able to do much about the situation. Nevertheless, they were compassionate listeners and peacemakers to the best of their ability.

Pledged candidate An Nguyen and Initial Formation candidate Khuong Nguyen did their Summer Ministry at Suoi Sao Youth Center in Dong Nai Province. An and Khuong taught and cared for 26 children, especially from two ethnic groups of the 54 different ethnic groups in Vietnam. These children



from the Ro Ngao and So Dang groups came from very poor families. There were an additional 20 children who came from the surrounding neighborhood to the youth center just for the day and went back home at night. An and Khuong taught them Math and English as well as played soccer with them and sang songs with them. Khuong was especially challenged this summer with having to spend a week in the hospital with one of the boys who had an injured leg. An and Khuong also enjoyed getting to know and work with the Servants of Jesus Sisters who had a youth center for girls next to their youth center for boys.

Blir Ntor, an Initial Formation candidate, spent his summer working at Son Ky Orphanage in Saigon teaching Math to the boys living there. He enjoyed working with Ky Phung, one of our members, who taught art there this Summer. They enjoyed working together at the orphanage and building community and teamwork with each other. An and Khuong said the same thing in their relationship this summer. Dung and Tinh likewise were appreciative of the



community building that happened as a result of doing common projects together.

Upon completion of our summer ministries, the members and candidates came together for our Annual Meeting of the Vietnam Mission on August 13th. Br. Manh Nguyen, Director of Son Ky Orphanage, was our guest speaker as those of us in the Vietnam Mission discerned our future involvement in the ministry to the youth in Br. Manh's orphanage. He gave a very informative presentation on orphanage ministry. Our members and candidates felt inspired and better informed by his talk and compelled to commit themselves to future ministry in this apostolate. We found it helpful to use the criteria for accepting a common ministry as Vietnam Mission given to us by our Moderator General, Fr. Bill Nordenbrock. Following these basic questions of criteria led us to a 14 to 1 vote of sentiment to continue supporting this ministry we have been in the past two years.



After an intense morning of discussion about orphanage ministry, we then enjoyed a nice meal at a local restaurant. The all-you-can-eat buffet left us satisfied and energized for the business meeting of the afternoon which included reports about Tan Thanh Mission, Vocations, Formation, and Finances. The reports proved to be necessary and informative as the Vietnam Mission strives to be transparent and inspirational in our ministries. This full day together proved to be beneficial to all those involved as we worked to build Community with each other through prayer and discussion throughout our time together. Our busy August then continued as our members and candidates in formation left on retreat August 16-22.

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Our focus together on the ministry of teaching and helping the youth leads me to seek the wisdom of our founder St. Gaspar and be inspired by his words to Msgr. Antonio Santelli in Letter 1599. St. Gaspar wrote, “What an opportunity this gave me to humble myself before God, asking that this youngster will always pray that, with all of the burdensome chores and demanding sacred commitments that I have, I will be able to fulfill my sacred duties. This is the charity that I seek both from you and from your young students in particular, whom you direct so brilliantly and with such success in your apostolate.” We hope and pray that we in the Vietnam Mission can faithfully carry out this apostolate to the poor orphans of Vietnam as we teach them and instill Christian values in them with our presence. ✠

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Rosica writes, “We are facing what is at the core of the current crisis: clericalism, the club mentality and a corrupt system of cronyism and ugly omertà [a code of honor that places importance on silence, non-cooperation with authorities, and non-interference in the illegal actions of others-ed.] that has seriously infected the church.” (One could, in my opinion, identify here many parallels to this in the political/governmental arena of our country.)

In his “Letter to the People of God” on August 20th, Pope Francis wrote: “It is impossible to think of a conversion of our activity as a Church that does not include the active participation of all the members of God’s People.... Such is the case with

clericalism, an approach that not only nullifies the character of Christians, but also tends to diminish and undervalue the baptismal grace that the Holy Spirit has placed in the heart of our people.” And at the conclusion he states, “Likewise, penance and prayer will help us to open our eyes and our hearts to other people’s sufferings *and to overcome the thirst for power and possessions that are so often the root of those evils* [italics mine].”

Karen Tumulty, in a *Washington Post* column, wrote of her experience at Mass in Washington, D.C. the Sunday after the Pennsylvania grand jury report was published. A young priest in his homily spoke about his hopes and dreams when he was ordained three years earlier, and how this current crisis had shaken him. But, she writes, he concluded his homily by saying, “For all the problems that we experience, there is still the presence of God in this place.” “He implored us not to be ‘repulsed by our brokenness,’ because ‘your prayers are essential. Your presence in this reform is essential.’ When he finished, the congregation erupted in applause.”

Just as the government of the United States does not belong to the president or members of Congress (their behavior notwithstanding), so the Church does not belong to the pope or bishops. Tumulty concludes, “Jesus gave it to us. And we must take it back. I also believe,” she continues, “the Catholic Church should reconsider its position on celibacy, which contributes to an environment of secrecy, and its patriarchal culture, which denies women a meaningful role in its leadership.” Reorganizing the power and control structure in the church is perhaps the only way to bring about real change (insert your analogies to our civil society here).

I call your attention to Fr. Keith Branson’s article in this issue, where he writes, “Truth truly needs no defenders; it remains in spite of any attack and can never be undone by force of lies and deception. Truth endures everything. We do not build a community of truth and justice by conquest, but by conversion.”

Always tell the truth and don’t keep secrets. It’s more than a TV show. ✠

Missionaries Without Borders

by Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S., Cincinnati Province

While living in Santiago, Chile I was invited by some very good friends (my Chilean family) to accompany them on a five-day trip to Mendoza, Argentina. I was happy to accept their invitation. At the time, I enjoyed “permanent residency” in Chile. So, we embarked on our trip up north and then traveled high into the Andes to cross the border into Argentina. When we arrived at the border between the two countries, we parked our car and made our way into the customs area to have our documents checked and stamped. My friends were ahead of me in line and had no trouble getting their papers stamped showing their identification cards. I was up next. The policeman asked me, “Where is your passport?” I gave him my “permanent residency visa” for Chile. It didn’t work! “I am sorry, Father, but you are a North American, and since your country demands a visa for Argentinians, it is reciprocal.”

I was in a tight spot. I asked the gendarme, “Well, what can I do?” He replied that I would have to go back to Santiago, get a visa, and return the next day! I wondered how I would do that since I was with friends in their car? “Oh don’t worry,” he said, “we will put you on the border, and you can hitch a ride with the next bus that comes through that will take you back to Santiago. I was told to wait. I motioned over to my friends who had already crossed into Argentina to go on and hopefully I would catch up with them somehow in the next day or so. After a wait that seemed like an eternity, the gendarme called me up to the counter and said, “Father, you are a missionary, right?” I said yes. “Well,” he said, “they say that missionaries don’t have a country. So, in this case, I am authorized to grant you a visa for five days!” He stamped the visa and said, “Enjoy your visit, but next time don’t forget to get a visa!”

As a missionary who has lived outside the U.S. for forty-eight years, I have become sort of a “Missionary without Frontiers.” I truly feel “at home” wherever I am. I no longer think in categories of “we” and “them.” We are sisters and brothers sharing a common charism, sustained and impelled by the spirituality of the Blood of Christ. I believe my life experiences in Perú, Chile, Guatemala, Italy, and Austria—as well as

visiting all of our missionaries around the world when I was Moderator General—have stretched my mentality and dismantled any walls I might have previously built around my heart.

We are engaged in a dialogue about a “New Creation” in the United States that would bring together the Provinces of Kansas City and Cincinnati to serve our shared mission to be agents of reconciliation and renewal in the Church and society. As I expressed in my presentation at both Province Assemblies recently, we laid the groundwork for this process at least thirty years ago. This process began through our collaboration in numerous areas, starting with formation and vocation ministry, with the Companion movement, through preaching, workshops, and retreats both on the national and international level, and through our community newsletters and publications. A renewed sense of Precious Blood spirituality inspired all this work.

As I reflect on my own life’s journey, one element which was clearly influential in breaking down the walls of thinking in the dualistic terms of “we” and “they” was the interaction with members of other provinces, vicariates, and missions. When I was able to put faces on the other and dialogue with them, previous prejudices and suspicions began to dissolve as I got to know the members, seminarians, and Companions and lay associates. Surely, each unit has its distinctive characteristics, but these should not be a cause of conflict or competition, but rather viewed as a possibility of enrichment to enhance our common mission for the service of the church and of the people. We share a common desire to respond to the cry of the blood in our particular contexts. The Blood of Christ breaks down the walls that might separate us and brings about “a new creation.”

Another aspect, which helped to stretch my mentality, was the growing awareness in our congregation that we (incorporated members and candidates, lay associates/companions and volunteers) are *all* Missionaries of the Precious Blood. We share a common mission that becomes more important

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Dewayne Brown and children

Healing Our Own

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

I am in my office working on a grant report when I hear “one-two, one-two, one-two ...”—so checking out the source of this continued rhythm I see Jonathan, one of our case managers here at PBMR, who is taking boxing classes himself, holding a boxing class with about 10 of our young men.

He obtained some equipment—gloves, pads, jump ropes, etc.—in the hope of offering boxing here at PBMR. I am sure some of you are thinking, “The last thing we need is more punches being thrown on the south side of Chicago.”

This class is less about boxing and more about a caring adult in the lives of these youth. Jonathan is present to them and lets them know that they are worth his time.

Some of our younger staff are from the neighborhood and know what it is like to grow up without a father and to be on your own at an early age. They know also the dangers that await them once they leave the Center. Therefore, Jonathan uses his time to interact

with them and show them that there is another way to live. Today he is doing it through the boxing program.

Growing up without a father in his life, Jonathan knows how hard it is to navigate life without that male in your life. He has a young son and does everything in his power to be there for him. And these young men who come to the Center, he takes them on as well. Frankly, he has a way with these kids—able to cut through some of the “attitude” and get them to open up and share their feelings and thoughts. They know that he is someone who does not judge them.

This month at the Art on 51st St. Cafe, we have an exhibit entitled: “A Celebration of Fathers.” We have a number of good fathers here at the Center and in the neighborhood. We wanted to celebrate what they do to build up our community.

Here are but a few of our fathers; we asked each to choose a word that reflected what it meant to be a father and to write a few words describing fatherhood.

Dewayne Brown-Courage

It means a lot to be a father. My children mean the world to me and I only want the best for them. I feel the first word that comes to me with a father is courage, because you always have to have it.



Shawn Reed and daughter

Shawn Reed-Responsibility

To be a father in the neighborhood is a big responsibility because the neighborhood I come from does not have many resources to help us for fatherhood. Being a father means a lot, because my mother raised me and eight other siblings alone. I never had a father figure, so once I had my daughter, I had to teach myself how to be the best father.



John Jones and daughter

John Jones-Role Model

Being a father means spending time to love and guide my daughter to be independent. Fatherhood means bonding and growing close to my daughter and having as much fun as possible with her.

Jonathan Little-LOVE

LOVE is the foundation of who I am as a father. I grew up without a father in my life and never knew

the importance of a father's LOVE. I am now a father of a handsome little boy and refuse to let my son grow up without the LOVE of both parents. I feel in our communities we don't express our love to one another enough, so I make it my #1 priority to tell him every day, "I LOVE YOU!" ✦

Jonathan Little and son



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than structures, which often tend to confine and limit our vision.

I hope that over the next months we will have the opportunity through one-on-one messages, conversations, and personal encounters, to begin breaking down the barriers that may separate us and to start building that "new creation." As we share our own stories and experiences, my prayer is that we all begin to consider ourselves "missionaries without borders." ✦

Chicago's Via Crucis

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

Once again, Chicago is in the news for the violence. It is hard to deny the gravity of the problem when the number of shootings in a seven-hour period on a Sunday morning reaches 40 people. As I expected, there were a lot of people weighing in on who or what is responsible: police, community, young men, poverty, gangs, drugs, trauma, etc.

For us here at PBMR, like so many, this is not a theoretical discussion. It is deeply, deeply personal. Last week three of the gunshot victims were part of our family—they were shot getting ready to start their workday in our woodshop. Luckily, they will survive the physical trauma; the emotional trauma, however, is a different story. Trauma is that which we cannot integrate or make sense of; it is that which interrupts our lives and causes deep emotional wounds. It causes outbursts of emotions: fear, deep sadness, and anger. Often it leaves one hypervigilant and paranoid, and erodes trust, which ultimately leaves one in isolation.

A couple hours after the shooting, we sat in circle with a group of young men from the Center. One of the young men burst into tears and covered his face. Everyone understood, for each feels the weight of living in a world where young men of color are more likely to die of homicide than anything else. While my heart aches at their pain, I feel some comfort in that we can at least offer these young men (and staff) a place where emotions are not silenced; a place where outrage and anger are given space, where healing can begin.

I don't have the answers, but I know this is exactly where we are supposed to be. This is a sacred place, not because we fill the air with platitudes or have answers, but because we are present.

Some years ago, Sr. Donna Liette C.P.P.S. and I were at Mater Dolorosa Retreat Center in California. Walking down the long winding path outside the main building, you stumble upon a series of large statues depicting Jesus on his path to Calvary. One was of the women of Jerusalem meeting Jesus, next was the one of Mary encountering Jesus as he strained under the weight of the cross. It was the pained and helpless look on Mary's face that really spoke to me. And in the eyes of Jesus was the

loving recognition of his mother. Even in her powerlessness there was the powerful presence of His mother—one who would not be separated from her son.

Last week, when our young men were shot in front of our art center, being so close, many of us arrived well before the ambulance. I held my hand over Dashaun's wound, pressing hard to stop the bleeding until another staff got the tourniquet around his leg and the ambulance arrived. It was a frightening moment, but also very sacred. As I washed the blood from my hand, I felt the tears well up in my eyes. While they were tears of being powerless in the face of so much violence, they were also tears of being connected to a spirituality that embraces pain and suffering and places it in the pain and suffering of Jesus.

Strange as it may sound, as I washed my hands, the song, "Song of Liberation," sung so often at our C.P.P.S. celebrations, came to mind: "The blood of Christ refreshes our souls, gives us new courage, liberates our lives. The blood of the poor soaks into the land, cries out for justice, yearning for peace. We are redeemed in the blood of Christ. We are washed in love. Sent by the blood, stained by the blood, we are servants of the blood of Christ. The bones of the weary ache for compassion, searching for vision, shout out with new strength."

We are where we are supposed to be—present to the suffering as we give witness to power of God's love. ✠

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We're All Armed

by Alan Hartway, C.P.P.S., Mead, Colorado

At Guardian Angels Parish in Mead, Colorado, hospitality is our evangelizing buzzword. We moved into our new parish center last Christmas Eve for the first Mass and realized immediately that we'd built too small. Our seating capacity and fire code is 250 people in the sanctuary space. That evening over 600 attended. Hospitality is so important to the parish that we secured the patron saint of hospitality, St. Josephine Bakhita, to have her relics in the altar.

So, imagine my shock when I drove up to Casper Wyoming—250 miles north of Mead—for a wedding, the groom a member of Guardian Angels who sat my house and cats last summer while I was in Europe. There's very little sign of humans once the drive gets into Wyoming, just vast open spaces, ranges of mountains off to the left in the west, and a highway with an 80 mile per hour speed limit (my preferred style).

My one and only stop on the way was in Wheatland, Wyoming for the restroom and water. At the door to this Sinclair station, I was confronted with a large sign, dead center on the door, at eye level: "CONSIDER ALL PERSONS AS ARMED." Now, that was hospitality. My first reaction was to think to myself, "Thanks for the warning." My second reaction was a kind of sadness over the fact that we've come to such a state that we must be afraid of one another rather than be friendly; it was not a hospitable greeting, after all. This led to a third reaction in my guts: anger. Anger arises out of a helplessness about something, and I felt helpless to do anything about it. I was just passing quickly through, and not willing or wanting to stay around and act out my province's corporate stance. I just wanted to get in and get out. I only bought a bottled water, not wanting to spend any more than that lest I support them. I used their restroom in protest against them.

On the way out, my eye stopped at a whole rack of cowboy poetry! I casually flipped through one of the books and landed on a poem about a disconsolate cowgirl pining for her rugged, untamed, high plains cowboy. The poem was mostly about how she would do anything for him forever. This was odd for

a state boasting of the first female governor in the nation. God help that poor cowboy when his cowgirl gets liberated! I enjoyed the cognitive dissonance. In any case, it was a poem about love, which means we'd do just about anything for the other person.

I drove the rest of the way to Casper without incident. The wedding was two fine Catholic families making a new family. The bride's parents from Casper were very hospitable, so I had to re-adjust my initial image of the state a bit. This very fine couple exchanged their covenant vows of love, to put all the weapons away, to share and talk, to work together to be changed and transform the world around them.

They began at the wedding itself. Immediately after the vows, they addressed the congregation, and invited everyone to share their joy of many blessings with the less fortunate than themselves and the gathered family and guests. They announced an offertory for the Torrington, Wyoming Youth Home, doing much of the same sort of work as PBMR in Chicago. In other words, the couple began their marriage with service to the world. I was very impressed. They knew that in some small way that they can make a difference. It was a beautiful wedding!

On the way back to Colorado later that evening, I had plenty of time to think about many things. For one, we live in a violent culture, but I don't have to contribute to it; rather I can notice the hand of God everywhere I can and change first my own attitudes. I have power by grace to do that at least. Further, if I get stuck in my anger as I was at that gas station sign, I'm only contributing to the problem. Finally, I met a lot of strangers that weekend, everyone one of them friendly, kind, and hospitable. During the drive I did not wear a Roman collar, so all people knew they were dealing with was some fat, old man. I did feel the hospitality, and I stopped thinking about everyone as armed.

Hospitality softens us, engages us in acts of generosity, and humbles us. This was the life of St. Josephine Bakhita. She's also the patron saint of victims of

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A Reflection on the C.P.P.S. Founding Anniversary

by Mike Bolin, Sedalia, Missouri Companion

Two hundred three years ago, on August 15, 1815, four men gathered in the Abbey of San Felice in Giano, Umbria, and prepared to begin a journey dedicated to a life of missions and spreading devotion to the Precious Blood. Gaspar Del Bufalo, urged by the pope and Francesco Albertini, gathered those men, establishing the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and enhancing their lives and the lives of others who came after them. Gaspar knew the neighborhood, he knew of the bandits, he knew of the terrain and the dangers within. He knew, through his own experiences, that there were going to be challenges, yet it had begun, he had started.

Gaspar had been given the abbey by the pope, a place of beginning. His faith was strong and his devotion to the Precious Blood had been enhanced during his time of exile. He had discerned this calling—but did he have fears, doubts, or concerns about what this humble beginning would evolve into, or did he just begin, take the first step in what he had been inspired to do? I believe that it was just exactly that. He opened the door of the abbey and looked out over the surrounding hills and invited others to join him. Join him in feeding the spiritual needs of the nearby communities. Join him in feeding the spiritual needs that they held within their hearts and minds.

Since my visit to San Felice during the Bi-Centennial Celebration Pilgrimage, I have often thought about what that first calling was like for those men in 1815. What direction, encouragement, or inspiration did St. Gaspar pass on to them? What were their expectations and how did they come to know that they needed to join him in this endeavor? Why were they invited to reach out to other communities? What were they tasked with, what were they burdened with? How they came about embracing the opportunity, making the decision, choosing to be a missionary. As my wife and I stood next to Gaspar's statue outside the abbey and overlooking those same hills, I could only imagine.

My imagination was further enlightened as I stood in the upstairs dorm room of the current seminary in

Albano on that same trip. I recalled when in 8th grade at a Catholic School in Kansas City thinking about which direction to take for my next step, high school, I looked at several options—St. John's Seminary and Rockhurst High School. I chose the latter. Today I don't remember all that went into that choice, but it had been made and I was prepared to take on whatever challenges that came with it. I do remember thinking as I stood in the upstairs room gazing out the windows overlooking Albano, what if I had this choice? Would I choose differently? I took Latin for four years and did well. Italian couldn't be much different. But that wasn't one of my options and I had made my choice and I believed I had made the right one.

I knew that for the next few years I would be taught by Jesuits who would come to expect more from me than the sisters and the lay teachers of my grade school. Aside from school, I needed to become less of a burden on my parents with such a large family. I had held jobs before but this time it somehow meant more to me to help provide especially for my needs and to start preparing for the future not knowing what it was exactly I wanted or where I wanted it to go. My ultimate goal was to obtain a college education and from there employment that would support my life. It had begun, my choice had been made, I had taken the first step. I needed to be an active participant in that choice and those that I would be making from there on.

I did have help along my path. I felt I had made the right choice for me as I was being prepared to reach my goals and beginning to have a better understanding that my faith would be one of the driving forces in my life and a basis as well as support for my future choices. Gaspar had this faith as he opened the abbey doors and stepped into his journey. He had discerned, he had prayed and now he had taken action, knowing that his faith and devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus was the basis of the action and his support along the journey.

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood, like many religious communities, would face tests and trials

along their journey, some by their own development and some by the evolvement of the Catholic Church. One of their largest concerns was how to keep their respective charisms in the wake of those trials and changes. Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S. discussed this in an article in the *Wine Cellar* in 2012. He noted that the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis* with the subtitle, “On the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life,” was presented by the Second Vatican Council in 1965.

This Decree directed religious institutes down a two-fold path: “The Council was calling for religious institutes to return to the sources of their origins in the Gospel and the charism of their founders, and then strive to adapt those insights to the current conditions in which the institute was living.” He goes on to say that the “the first ten years after the Council were a time of intense reflection and debate” and the Missionaries of the Precious Blood were not exempt from this. They met in Rome and internationally in an attempt towards redefining the institute, and according to Schreiter’s article, “a number of positive things emerged that reflected genuine renewal.” He concluded that the Council’s message “has been a special gift, providing a renewed vision and a continuing effort to adapt to current needs for the sake of preaching and living the Gospel.”

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood had discerned, made their choice, and began the journey of renewal and adaptation and were active participants as they faced the challenges of the journey. Their faith and devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus would still be the basis and their support along the path.

The formation of the “New Creation” has manifested the same processes St. Gaspar went through. There was a need or request for a different direction or different actions necessary to maintain the mission set before us by God through the Holy Spirit. We have discussed and discerned and set out the next step. We have opened the door. In a reflection that I wrote after our last Companion retreat I stated: “Our journey as part of this ‘New Creation’ requires our participation, our engagement. It requires us to ‘Clear the Mechanism,’ engage the Spirit and become a participant.

At the risk of having one too many movie metaphors, this is “our Mission, should we choose to

accept it.” Our support will not self-destruct; God’s love for us is everlasting. St. Gaspar had that faith when began his journey and was supported by that love. He wrote, “Oh, if everyone would love God! Be assured that our society is a spring in the midst of the evangelical field. Let us be active and let us set deep roots for this mystical plant so that it will spread for the greater glory of God.”

The doors have been opened. We have been invited. Will we choose to step into the “New Creation”? Will we choose to be an active participant?

The Missionaries numbered 200 at the time of his death some 22 years later. Over time and as need or opportunity expressed or presented, the Missionaries found themselves in Europe, America, Canada, and South America and most recently Vietnam. ✠

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human trafficking, and now this parish is established by the Archbishop of Denver as shrine for them to stop and pray should they find their way into these parts. Few of them will be the average Caucasian, but rather people of color and people of material poverty, most likely “uncomfortable” people. Yet here they will be welcomed among us, and I know that this hospitality is going to take a lot of work. ✠

Saint Josephine Bakhita



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