

THE New Wine PRESS



Volume 24 No. 7 • March 2016

**Creating Something New
A Sign of Life
Singing a New Church
Leaving a Mark**



Immigration Reform: Where Are We Going?

2015-16 Peace & Justice Series

Session 3: April 1, 2, 3, 7 & 17

Journey Toward a Corporate Statement

Session Three Locations, April 1-3, 7*

April 1	April 2	April 3	April 7
4 p.m.	10 a.m.	4 p.m.	4 p.m.
St. Francis Xavier Parish St. Joseph, Missouri	Sacred Heart Parish Sedalia, Missouri	St. James Parish Liberty, Missouri	St. Mary Parish Albia, Iowa

**Session Three presentation will be the same at the above locations.*

April 17th's presentation will combine Sessions One, Two and Three in an all-day session. To be held at St. Edwards Church, Newark, California from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Contact Br. Daryl Charron, c.p.p.s. for more information: daryl.charron@yahoo.com.

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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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Voices and Choices

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

“Lately, I’ve been thinking and praying on a verse from Second Timothy: ‘For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind’... And fear does funny things. Fear can lead us to lash out against those who are different, or lead us to try to get some sinister ‘other’ under control. Alternatively, fear can lead us to succumb to despair, or paralysis, or cynicism. Fear can feed our most selfish impulses, and erode the bonds of community” (President Obama, National Prayer Breakfast, February 4th).

“Let us together ask our God for the gift of conversion, the gift of tears, let us ask him to give us open hearts... open to his call heard in the suffering faces of countless men and women. No more death! No more exploitation! There is still time to change; there is still a way out and a chance, time to implore the mercy of God.... May we commit ourselves to conversion; may we be signs lighting the way and announcing salvation. I know of the work of countless civil organizations working to support the rights of migrants. I know too of the committed work of so many men and women religious, priests and lay people in accompanying migrants and in defending life. They are on the front lines, often risking their own lives. By their very lives they are prophets of mercy; they are the beating heart and the accompanying feet of the Church that opens its arms and sustains” (Pope Francis, February 17th, at the Mexican-U.S. border).

“I will build a great wall—and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me—and I’ll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words” (Donald Trump, whenever).

Every year on the First Sunday of Lent we hear the story of Jesus confronting temptation in the wilderness. It is a reminder to me that this liturgical time is one of competing voices and choices. A call to make choices that lead to life and growth.

Walls or bridges. Judgment or mercy. Fear or hope. Digging in or stepping out. Tried and true or something new. Exclusion or inclusion. Keeping a distance or getting close. One thread that runs through this month’s articles and announcements is the various choices that are being offered and made by groups and individuals trying to live out the spirituality of the Precious Blood. I invite you to read them using the lens of voices and choices. We might ask ourselves in what direction am I tempted to go? Which voice is commanding my attention or seducing me, for better or worse?

The Next 50

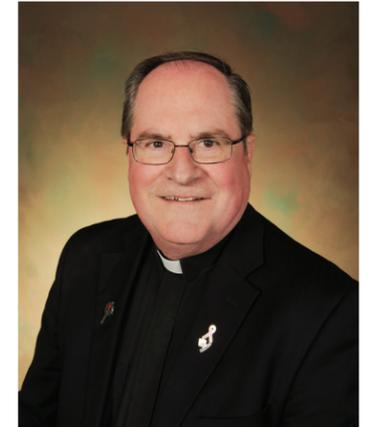
by Fr. Mark Miller, C.P.P.S., Leadership Team

This past year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of our Kansas City Province. Fr. Joe Nassal reminded us of our history in several issues of *The New Wine Press*. He painted in broad strokes the significant events and decisions that were made over these past 50 years that have brought us as a Province to who and where we are today. I have been a part of this history for the past 44 years. I remember in those first 10 years the amount of energy and time spent in clarifying our Statutes and stating how we wished to be in relationship with one another and the type of government we wished to embrace. For the first 25 years, it was only our priests, brothers, and students who comprised our thoughts and plans. For the next 25 years, it was priests, brothers, students and companions. Now we are moving into the next 25 years.

Thirty incorporated members gathered January 25-27, 2016 to share our hopes and dreams for the future. As we looked around the room, we recognized that we didn’t need as many tables and chairs as we did 50 years ago—but that didn’t seem to matter. What mattered were the relationships and the conversations that took place around those tables, both in formal sessions as well as in our social sharing. People spoke with hopefulness and with a real conviction that, while smaller, we are offering a profound gift to the church through our witness of spirituality and ministry.

What brought us together was the invitation of our Moderator General, Fr. Bill Nordenbrock, who had asked that each Province engage in some dreaming for the future. While he gave us the demographics of what the future looked like, we chose not to be overwhelmed by the numbers—or lack thereof—but rather to have a conversation about how each of us felt called to embrace the future with a sense of purpose. We recognized that there are some changes that will need to take place, but we also focused on the fact that, while the numbers of incorporated members were less, we have partners and co-workers among our companions who are living out our charism—whom we ought to more intentionally invite into our shared ministry and leadership. We talked about new models of shared leadership, re-visiting our mission statement, strengthening the bonds of relationship with the members of the Cincinnati Province, becoming more committed to issues such as immigration reform and the eradication of the death penalty, connecting with those who are marginalized, our Vietnam Mission and a desire to express our spirituality and ministry for the future in more creative ways with a renewed sense of community.

We acknowledge that we have only taken the first step in preparing for the next 50 years, and it will take energy and commitment to move us forward. But just as our predecessors did that for us in the past 50 years, we committed ourselves to pass on our legacy to those coming after us in these next 50 years.



Creating Something New

by Fr. Garry Richmeier, C.P.P.S.



(L-R): Frs. Joe Uecker, Matthew Link, Jim Betzen

At the gathering of incorporated members in January, much of the discussion centered on creating something new as a community in order to remain alive and vibrant. Everyone seemed to agree that we do important and good work where we minister now. But many expressed the view that we may have to change how and where we minister if we want to continue as a province well into the future. I would like to offer some of my thoughts to hopefully further the conversation.

It seems to me that an important key to remaining alive is attracting people to join us. Two key words here are “join” and “us”—and we will probably need to clarify/adapt/change both of them somewhat.

Who is “us”? We have a name, we have a list of ministries we do, we have the Bond of Charity that we live, and we have a charisma and a spirituality. People who have grown up in the community like I did, and people who have hung around the community a long time, know who the “us” is. Most other people see individual members doing good work, but the “us” is more difficult to see. About the only way people can get a decent idea of who we are as a community is by spending a significant amount of time with us, something fewer and fewer people are willing to do in this day and age without some clarity up front.

When we describe ourselves as a society of apostolic life, living the Bond of Charity, involved in a wide range of ministries, people generally aren’t very clear about what that means. Therefore, in this age of quick access to information, they may just pass on by because they didn’t hear anything specific to pique their interest. We need a better way to clearly and (relatively) quickly communicate to people who we are so they can decide if being associated with us is what they want to pursue.

People usually begin by asking what we do. Maybe we could more narrowly focus our work to a handful

of ministries centered on a more clear and concrete purpose. People who are interested in serving that purpose may then join the work and hang around long enough to build a relationship with us.

An example that would fit well with our charisma and spirituality: We could decide that our main purpose is to help the inner city of Kansas City find healing, reconciliation, and new life, and advertise ourselves in that way. Most people would immediately have a good idea what that means. There would be many ministries possible in serving that purpose: pastoring parishes, community organizing, social services, caring for victims of violence, conflict resolution, working with other organizations doing the same things, etc. People drawn to that kind of work could live and work alongside of us and get a sense of our charisma, our spirituality, and our Bond of Charity, and some may decide to enter into a long-term relationship with us.

Doing something like this would come at a price. We would have to agree on what our main purpose would be, and most of the active members would need to commit themselves to it. We would have to leave some present ministries to focus on the one agreed upon main purpose. There would have to be a number of incorporated members and/or Companions living closer together so inquirers could get a sense of what makes us a community besides just our common work.

We will probably also have to expand our idea of how people “join” us. Some may join as canonical members of the community, or as Companions. But others may join us as volunteers. Maybe we could allow people to make temporary commitments of a number of years, welcoming them to live, work, and

Members celebrating Mass



pray in our community as any member does. Since it seems that people today are not very interested in joining the community as life-long celibates, finding new ways of allowing people to join us may be necessary and crucial.

The refrain “Do we have the energy for creating something new?” was repeated often at our gathering in January. I for one did not hear us clearly answer that question. Maybe the only way we will find an answer to that question is to identify a number of “new things” we could create (like the example I described

above). Then we would see if enough people would be willing to change what they are doing now, or how they are doing it, in favor any of the new possibilities. If people are not willing to put their time, energy, and focus into any of the new possibilities, we will know for certain that as a community we do not have energy for creating something new.

Change is inevitable, as someone said at our gathering. We can have some voice in how we will change, or we can live with whatever change happens automatically. The choice is up to us.

A Sign of Life

by Fr. Michael Goode, C.P.P.S.

When, as a Province, we were called to gather in Leavenworth this past January, we probably all had our preconceived ideas as to why we were going to come together. Overall, I believe one idea was that we were to gather to discuss the future in relation to the Cincinnati Province (whatever that all might eventually mean) in response to Fr. Bill Nordenbrock’s recent article on statistics and projected membership numbers in the three North American Provinces. However, as the meeting began, what became evident was a challenge for all of us to examine who we are as the Kansas City Province.

We have unique blessings and gifts. We have unique talents, hopes, and insights into the Gospel mission. We have dreams and convictions linked to what we believe the Gospel is teaching us, and we know deeply that there are great challenges ahead. I was blessed in that, for me, the time we had together was one in which we shared struggles, hopes, and faith. There was seen the possibility of growing together as brothers in our faith sharing and recognition of the potential we have.

In our humanity and faith we can grow in the bond of charity together. It’s the mandate! I feel that in our being together those days, we caught a glimpse in a deeper way who we are and who we can be in the Blood of Jesus Christ. In our group, I was able to feel and share in the marvel of the Mercy of the Blood. I felt we all did. I felt a spirit of thankfulness for the Blood of Christ and how it has been forming the hearts of the men in the

group over the years. I felt the compassion and support that flowed forth from one member to another in the group.

The Blood of Christ is so powerful that we can’t deny its full potential for us as individuals and as a group to let down barriers and hear Christ’s calling us to be brothers in our humanity first and in our faith shared. God is good! God calls us to be linked together in that goodness given to us. That’s what we have that is wonderful. That call is what allowed the leadership over these past twenty-five years or so to challenge us to give witness to and experience the blessing of Companions and of hearing the call to work in speaking of the all-inclusive love of Christ for all people whoever they are. That’s the call of the Precious Blood, which opens us to grow in the love of God and the challenge to share that with the world in the painful times in which we find ourselves in the world.

I believe that during our time together in Leavenworth, there was a challenge to recognize the strengths of the Kansas City Province. The very fact of our being able to come together to center in on who we are is strength for us. It’s always a blessing to be able to begin a process of soul searching on a personal level—and certainly is on a community level. There’s a conviction, because of our coming together to “soul search” together. A spirit of hope is offered us even though numbers are smaller than years ago. The strengths we have are signs of the Holy Spirit. That is a sign of life we have.



Congregation at Fr. Nhan Bui's first Mass at his home parish in Saigon, Vietnam

Singing A New Church

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

Monastery bells ringing at 4:00 a.m. is a wake-up call few people would like. Normally I wouldn't like it either, but Vietnam changed my sleep patterns, so I enjoyed that call and the ensuing Matins wafting across the garden to the guest rooms of the Benedictine retreat center in Saigon. At times, bells rang during the chant, giving it special intensity and power that made the foreign words superfluous. Throughout the day, the monks singing the Office would flavor my meditation as we took our breaks.

In late January, Timothy Armbruster and I made the long journey to give a retreat to our brothers of the Vietnam Mission. We offered them the image of Gaspar the preacher, sharing different perspectives of how preaching is something involving our whole being and our faith, going beyond words to include even the silent art of clowning. They offered us a homily of hospitality and energy, making us welcome to share in their community. Ky's art and Hoa's music were wonderful gifts of the spirit; Peter Tam offered us

fraternal care that embodied the best tradition of our community. All of the students reached out to us in ways beyond the constant encouragement to "practice your English!"

Most of all, I treasured the singing: the Vietnamese church sings much more of the liturgy than we do. Our Mission is bilingual, routinely praying in both Vietnamese and English daily; however, they sing the Vietnamese portion. St. Augustine said: "Those who sing well pray twice," and they pray well in Vietnam. Fr. Dominic Bui's Mass of Thanksgiving was a great song of praise, even though I understood almost none of the words.

It's clear to me I'm not a Third World missionary; I freely admit I'm a soft Westerner. My old bag of bones isn't very flexible or agile, and Vietnam is a different world I could only visit, not live in. Vietnam is singing a new church into being, and the song of God's love poured out in the Blood of Christ is finding a new resonance there. It is a melody I will always remember.

Leaving a Mark

by Fr. Timothy Armbruster, C.P.P.S., Regional Vocation Director



Fr. Timothy Armbruster's "Clown Talk" during the retreat at the Vietnam Mission

I never realized how important the image of the cup is to me until I saw it molded into the security bars of our house in Vietnam. That metal cup was to me a symbol of welcome. As we entered the house and became aware of the other Precious Blood images, all were signs of welcome—as were the familiar faces there to greet us when we landed in Saigon at 1:00 a.m. on January 30th.

After Fr. Keith Branson and I had settled in and adjusted, we began our retreat focused on the theme "Community and Spirituality." As missionaries we are called to be preachers in various ways. Following in the footsteps of our founder St. Gaspar, our whole life is wrapped up into our preaching. We shared some insights into reading scripture and connecting it with modern day life. We talked about storytelling. I even got the chance to put on the clown face and tell my story of clowning and preaching. I must admit I wasn't sure how the clowning would be received, but I took a chance and did it anyway. It was an absolute hit!

I shared how in clowning a clown doesn't make fun of others, but rather challenges others to see the world around them in a different way. The same is true for a preacher who is challenged to bring the word of God alive in different ways. I finished my talk with a skit about breaking bread. I set the fancy table with a handkerchief tablecloth and a glass with flowers. Sitting down at the table, I pulled from a plastic bag a single slice of bread sandwich. Realizing everyone was staring at me and I had only one sandwich, I turned my back to eat in privacy. Not liking all those eyes staring at me, I decided I could share the sandwich. So

I stood up, walked to the others and proceeded to tear off a piece for each. This was all done without saying a word. As I asked, "What did I do?" they answered, "breaking bread, Eucharist, sharing." So even across language barriers, the actions spoke. Afterwards, I said that as we share our stories and we preach, for better or worse we leave our mark on those who have listened. I then wiped my finger across my face painted with clown white and made a mark on each of their faces.

After our retreat ended, we had the opportunity to concelebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving with newly ordained Fr. Dominic Bui in his home parish. The Mass was followed by a joyous celebration of music and dancing. Although our time in Vietnam was short, we did have the opportunity to tour and get a short glimpse of the city. The traffic was just as everyone said, namely, crazy! Everyone just goes! However, one thing that I noticed that was missing compared to U.S. traffic was any kind of road rage. Although everyone was honking, it was more, "beep, beep, I'm here," whereas in the U.S. it is more like, "BEEP! BEEP! GET OUT OF MY WAY!"

As I left that mark of clown white on our members and candidates, this experience has also left a mark on me as well. Each day that we were there—from landing to departure—we shared in great stories and great hospitality. Even the Benedictine monks at the Retreat Center chanting Morning Prayer in the early morning hours was a sound of welcome—despite waking me up just as I was finally falling asleep. The week was an experience of Precious Blood hospitality at its best.

Fr. Nhan Bui during his first Mass at his home parish in Saigon



New Possibilities

by Tim Deveney, Director of Precious Blood Volunteers



Pat Wood, Jade Bowman, Stephanie Schell, Kara McNamara, Nora O'Connell, Michael D'Netto and Bonnie Kane

“Often the Holy Spirit can't work though and in us if we are too tied up in our own images of what to expect.” Former Precious Blood Volunteer, Pat Wood (2014), sent me this thought as she finished her time as a volunteer. She noted how her experience as a Precious Blood Volunteer helped open her up to new visions of what is possible. Precious Blood Volunteers helps people see beyond their own images and challenges our volunteers to do what current volunteer, Jade Bowman, wrote in a previous edition of *The New Wine Press*, namely “grow into a better me.”

This past fall I visited with several of our former volunteers while out recruiting. Visiting with them and hearing about their lives is one of the great blessings and joys of being the director of Precious Blood Volunteers. They are a breath of fresh air and give me additional inspiration to invite others to join us for a year of volunteer service. I am heartened by the choices our former volunteers have made to live out their baptismal calls.

During my visit to Creighton University in Omaha I had dinner with former Precious Blood Volunteer, Stephanie Schell (2014), and her boyfriend Jay. Stephanie gave me an update about her first year of medical school. She relished talking about her anatomy class. Jay and I did our best to steer the discussion away from this topic well before our burgers were served! She spoke fondly of her time in Kansas City and the difference it made in her life.

I worked with former Precious Blood Volunteer, Kara McNamara (2013), at the University of Dayton's volunteer fair and joined with her and Nora O'Connell (2013) the next morning for breakfast. They shared with me their current work, their hopes for Precious Blood Volunteers and how they are living their lives. I was impressed by their commitment to others. Kara is working for the Victory Project in Dayton serving young

men from low-income homes. She is beginning her formation for the Companions group in Dayton. Nora is working for the American Cancer Society coordinating the “Relay for Life” fundraiser. She is also studying to become a Child Life specialist working with children who suffer from cancer and their families.

On that same trip I had lunch with Michael D'Netto in Columbus, Ohio. He is currently working on an MBA while taking a year break from medical school at Ohio State University. This is an unusual step for a person studying to be a doctor, so I asked him about it. He explained that while serving as a Precious Blood Volunteer he witnessed some of the ways hospitals do not best serve their patients and would like to put both an MBA and MD to work in service to others. After lunch Michael walked me next door and gave me a tour of the church he attends.

We impact our volunteers by helping them see where God is calling them in their lives while serving others and living in community. They have their eyes opened through working with people from much different backgrounds than their own, the availability of daily prayer and the challenge of sharing space with others. We also provide this growth through monthly reflections (available at www.preciousbloodvolunteers.org), upcoming spirituality/justice nights with the Jesuit Volunteers community in Kansas City, and sponsoring volunteers to attend Catholics on Call at CTU.

They also provide new life to the Precious Blood community. Our former volunteers have brought a new energy to the homes in which they live. Bonnie Kane (2011) served as a member of the Volunteers' Advisory Board for the last three years. Nora and Kara continue to serve as members of the Companions Young Adult Task Force where they have offered their experience

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The clinic in Altos de Santa Maria

Proyecto de Salud Sangre de Cristo

by Sr. Dani Brought, A.S.C., Administrative Director

Proyecto de Salud Sangre de Cristo in La Labor and La Leyenda, Guatemala is one of the beneficiaries of the Human Development Fund Grants this past year. Sr. Dani Brought, A.S.C., Administrative Director, recently provided us with a report on their ministry there. The following is taken from her report.

Funding from the Human Development Fund was used to subsidize the cost of medical care services at one of the five medical clinics of the Sangre de Cristo Health Care Project during 2015. The clinic is located in the community of Altos de Santa Maria, a marginalized area north of Guatemala City. Altos de Santa Maria started out as a squatter area and continues to be a low income, transient community. Constant gang activity and extreme poverty contribute to this community being listed as one of the most violent in our area. The needs are great in this community and no other organization or provider has accepted the risks to offer health services in this area. We began services here over 17 years ago and amidst the problems encountered, we remain committed to providing services for those most in need.

The Altos de Santa Maria medical clinic provided services to 3,367 patients during the 12 months of 2015. In addition, over the 12-month period, 2,943 patients were attended at the adjacent community pharmacy. Medicine options at an affordable cost allowed patients to obtain and carry out the treatment plan as prescribed by the attending physician.

The three most frequently seen complaints/diagnosis in the medical clinic during this past year continued to

be respiratory illnesses, gastrointestinal problems and gynecological obstetric. Focusing on preventative care, especially in regards to women's health, educational sessions about pap exams were held at each clinic. During this funding period a total of 957 pap exams were done, of which 15% were carried out at the Altos de Santa Maria clinic. This shows a 4% increase over the number of exams done the previous year. We attribute this increase to the ongoing education and support of women at our clinics. We also had a significant increase of patients that presented with severe viral symptoms, fever and joint pain due to an epidemic of mosquito borne dengue and chikungunya disease.

During this same time period, we conducted a quality of care satisfaction survey at the medical clinic in Altos de Santa Maria. The recipients of our services responded in the questionnaires and during the interviews that they were very satisfied with the quality of care received and along with saying that the clinic is close to home, costs are accessible, medicine is available; the overriding reason stated by patients for seeking services at our clinic is because of the attention and care given by our long-term staff. Patients responded that the staff members take time

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Tommy Meyers doing artwork at PBMR

You Have to Get Close

by Fr. Denny Kinderman, C.P.P.S., PBMR

“you got tuh go there tuh know there. Yo papa and yo mama and nobody else can’t tell yuh and show yuh.”
-Zora Neale Hurston

Visit the imprisoned. It’s one of the seven corporal works of mercy, and also part of our ministry at Precious Blood Center for Reconciliation—including the relationships that continue upon being released from prison. Perhaps the most transforming aspect of this act of mercy is what happens to the one who visits. You got “tuh go there tuh know there,” Janie says to Phoeby in Zora Neale Hurston’s novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. “There” embraces everywhere and everyone you get to know that society prefers to keep at a distance. There you get involved in real life situations that can make you feel like you’re dying, or at least lost—being led to “where you do not wish to go” (John 21:18). I think that’s what Pope Francis means by the joy of the gospel. There’s more joy to be found in going there where God wants than in going where I want.

During this year of mercy Pope Francis reminds us that activities that truly enrich the lives of others is the kind of fasting that is expected of us, especially in Lent. He writes, “I distrust a charity that costs nothing and

does not hurt... We need to hear once more the voice of the prophets who cry out and trouble our conscience.”

Every Sunday morning I am aware that volunteering as jail chaplain means I don’t really have to show up—but here I am, Lord, transform me. In that assembly of incarcerated men in the Cook County jail, we try to drown out the jailhouse noise with our singing. As Hezekiah Walker sings in a current gospel hymn, “I need you; you need me. We’re all a part of God’s body.” Some of the men there are in protective custody; some sexually diverse; most are not Catholic. All of us are “standing in the need of prayer”—which we often sing for an opening hymn praising God who is not exclusively Catholic, as Francis reminds us. There is closeness in that gathering, welcoming the presence of the Lord who enriches our lives.

Bryan Stevenson’s grandmother tells him in his book *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, “You
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can’t understand most of the important things from a distance, Bryan. You have to get close.”

Visits one-on-one in the juvenile detention center or in the county jail or prisons, accompaniment in courtrooms, as well as daily life at our center bring us close to the broken social systems that fail our neighborhoods and cities. Francis pulls at our hearts these days, calling us to be like Jesus and put mercy before judgment. Yet in our courts of law judgment takes center stage leaving mercy on the back burner. Attending meetings and offering our monthly RJ Café are just a couple ways we work toward systemic changes revealing inadequacies in education, community relations with the police, poverty, lack of job opportunities and insufficient recreation facilities. Sometimes we need to be the voice that cries out and troubles the consciences of those who fail “tuh go there tuh know there.” There are obvious problems to ponder about racial disparities. Our broken criminal justice, education, and economic systems make victims of those being accused of victimizing. The pope’s visits with the imprisoned certainly cry out for mercy for all the victims. Restorative justice tends to the needs of all who are harmed.

We get close to our youth is by accompanying them to court. We always ask, “When’s your next court date?” One of us from PBMR will accompany the youth and any family members. Last week after driving three youth to court, another met us there with mother, grandmother and an aunt with a two-month old baby. In the juvenile court waiting area we run into youth and families we know or soon get to know. It’s a place for coming close to upset and troubled mothers and families, hearing stories that pull us into their heartfelt worry and loving confrontations.

We get close by seeking out, living among, and pulling in close those estranged and society’s throw-aways suffering from some level of trauma. Brian’s grandmother, who constantly told him, “you have to get close,” would hug him so tightly he could barely breathe. After a little while, she would ask, “Bryan, do you still feel me hugging you?” If I said yes, she’d let me be; if I said no, she would assault me again.”

I think our pope wants us to hug social outcasts during this year of mercy so we can be hugged. There need to be times when “you got tuh go there tuh know there” allowing God to assault you with a loving, merciful hug so tightly you will barely be able to breathe. When did we get close to you, Lord? As long as you got close to one of the least you got close to me, and I pulled you in like a grandmother wanting to keep you close.

Volunteers, continued from page 8

and opinions to us in helping broaden the appeal of the Companions to a younger generation.

The witness of Stephanie, Kara, Nora and Michael is a small sample of the impact serving as a Precious Blood Volunteer can have on a person. My continued hope and work is to make Precious Blood Volunteers a place where people can grow in their relationship with God through living in community, walking and serving those who suffer and seeking reconciliation. Although our program is small I can see the impact of this ministry has on our volunteers, the Precious Blood community and the people our volunteers serve. Through the continued support of the Precious Blood community we can help our volunteers grow into being better followers of Christ.

Human Development Fund, continued from page 9

to listen, to explain the illnesses and treatments given and most of all, cure them of their ailments, all done with a special human touch and love. Keeping in mind our goal of providing quality health care for the people most in need in our area, we were able to see that subsidizing the costs of the medical clinic visit made the services more economically accessible and allowed this goal to be attained. Sufficient funding also allowed us to continue to maintain this clinic in this high-risk area where these services are otherwise unavailable. In order to help promote self-reliance and self-esteem the patients participated, as able, in the payment process. Availability and accessibility, both by location and costs, have helped to improve the health and thus the quality of life of the persons living in this local community.

We say great things happen when we use the gifts that God has given us and join together in the service of others. And so, on behalf of all the persons who benefited from these services during the past 12 months, we thank the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Kansas City Province for partnering with us, the Sangre de Cristo Health Care Project and helping to improve the quality of life for so many people. Together we continue to carry out the vision and call given to us by Pope Francis: “May we help others to discover the joy of the Christian message: a message of love and of mercy.” Thank you for being true bearers of that Christian message in our world today. And may our generous God grace each of you with blessings as you continue to carry on the mission.

The Spirituality of Discernment

by Kathy Keary, Co-director of Precious Blood Companions

As a community, the practice of discernment is our guiding light. We seek divine direction as we plan and as we live out our charism. We understand that we are called to leave our egos at the door, and seek the will of God in all things. Planning our future as members, Companions, and volunteers is grounded in this very act. We continue to be inspired by the words of our founder: "May the Lord give you his holy inspiration to decide what is for his glory, the only thing that we must all search for."

A discerning community is made up of discerning people. Henri Nouwen does a wonderful job of leading the reader to a life of discernment in the book, *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life*, a compilation of his writings. He describes discernment as a "faithful living and listening to God's love and direction so that we can fulfill our individual calling and shared mission." Five topics are explored as vehicles to becoming a discerning person: silence and solitude, scripture, nature, one another, and the events of our lives.

It's no secret that we live in a busy, noisy world and often our lives are quite hectic. Finding the time and space for silence and solitude can be challenging, but then aren't most things of value? Doesn't it make sense that we will become more attuned to the stirrings God places in our hearts in the stillness? Perhaps this is why St. Gaspar instructed his congregation: "Place yourself in a state of silence. Do nothing, but only listen to the voice of God." He appears well aware of the divine message: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:11).

I have long been a *lectio divina* enthusiast. I love the way that God speaks to us in the here and now as individuals and as a community through these ancient words. Nouwen states that through this practice "we become more aware of the active presence of God's spirit within us." We open ourselves to being shaped by God just as the potter forms the clay. Showing up day after day to commune with the living God in prayer not only renews us, but it also goes a long way in conforming us to God's will. Practicing *lectio divina* in community enriches the experience. In the words of Nouwen: "While discernment begins in solitude, individual seekers of God always come together in

community, for the Spirit gathers all believers into one body for accountability and mutual support."

In Nouwen's book, he speaks of how prayer and contemplation open our eyes to nature, and that nature makes us more attentive to divine guidance. This brings to mind how the simple elements of nature, wheat and grapes become not only a doorway to the sacred but are transformed into the body and blood of Christ. Also, the dying and rising embedded in our seasons speaks of the core of Precious Blood spirituality: the Paschal Mystery, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Being attuned to the voice of nature opens us to divine wisdom. As Nouwen explains: "All of nature conceals great secrets that cannot be revealed if we do not listen carefully and patiently to God's hidden language."

God often places people in our lives for a special reason or communicates to us through others. I suspect each of us can cite examples of this experience. Thomas Merton believed that paying attention to the people God places in our lives is a means of discerning what God is up to in one's life. As a community, we place emphasis on the value of collaboration. The Spirit appears in surprising ways in this type of setting bearing fruit of innovation and creativity.

Discernment invites the reader to draw a series of stones, with each one representing a major event in one's life. Then the reader is asked to make notes along this path regarding major cultural or world events that have occurred during this time period, such as political changes, wars, major natural events, etc. The final step is to reflect on this question as you review the drawing: What might God be doing in my life and in the world? This exercise makes it clear that God definitely acts through the events in our life. Wisdom tells us that this type of exercise would be of benefit in the discernment of the future of a community or movement. How has God spoken through the events of the past? How is he speaking through the currents sign of the times?

The merit in fostering a lifestyle of discernment is addressed in the Gospel of John: "As a branch cannot bear fruit by itself but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me." And Jesus promises us that he will be with us always until the end of the age. May we embrace his presence and influence as he makes straight our path.

2016 Provincial Assembly



Faith in Action

June 6-8

Church of the Annunciation
Kearney, Missouri

Featured Speaker:

Sr. Simone Campbell, sss
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Online registration opens April 15, 2016 at preciousbloodkc.org

Mercy and the Spirituality of the Precious Blood

Precious Blood Retreat

Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S., Facilitator

June 21-24 (27th), 2016

Adorers of the Precious Blood Ruma Center

#2 Pioneer Lane, Red Bud, Illinois 62278

June 21-24: \$350 June 21-27: \$400

**Fr. Barry will give input only on June 21-24. Those who wish to finish their retreat in silence are welcome to remain at the Ruma Center in quiet prayer and reflection until the 27th.*

Retreat begins the morning of the 21st. Please gather by 7 p.m. on June 20th.

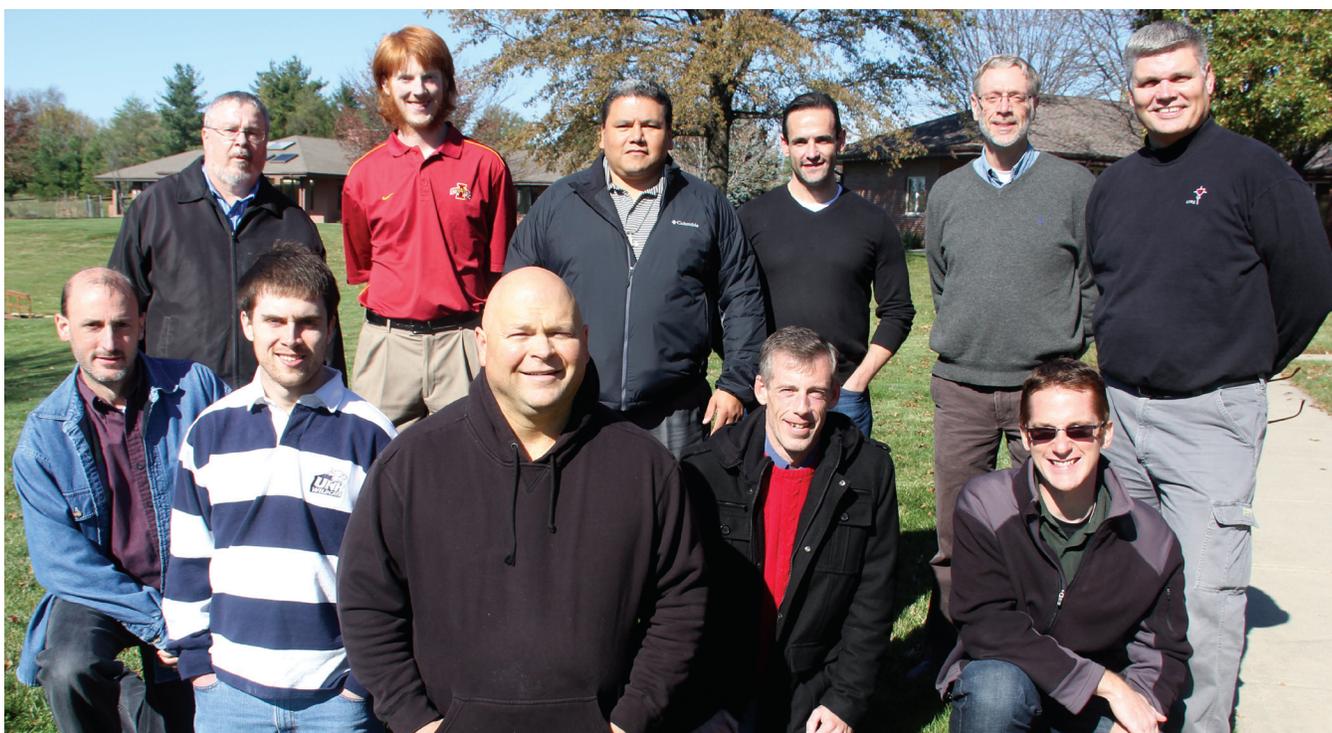
Participant number is limited.

Registration form available at preciousbloodkc.org/retreat

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Discernment Retreat

March 11-13, 2016

St. Charles Center

2860 US Route 127

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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.