

# THE **New Wine** PRESS

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Volume 27 No. 9 • May 2019





# Let us serve God with holy joy.

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

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*Front cover image: artwork from the 2019 Kansas City Provincial Assembly*

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

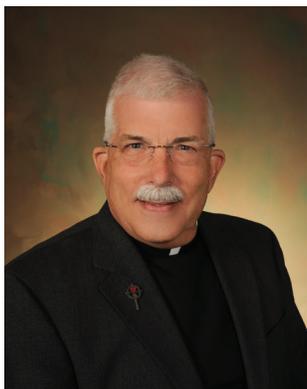
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## Y'all Means All

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

Several weeks ago, I attended a concert by John McCutcheon, an accomplished folk singer, song writer, and story teller. We share some of the same roots, both being from Wisconsin and both of us having attended the same high school and college (although we were three years apart and I did not know him well). I have greatly enjoyed his recordings and live performances over the past thirty-plus years. He is a highly skilled (multiple instruments), prolific (40 albums) musician, a passionate advocate for justice issues, and well known around the world.

At one point in the concert he shared that when people ask him how he responds some of what is happening in this country, he said something to effect of “I don’t mention names, I just write a song.” Let me give two examples from that evening.

In May of 1939, the HMS St. Louis set sail from Hamburg, Germany. On board were over 900 Jewish refugees, fleeing for their lives from the hatred and cruelty that would eventually claim millions of lives. The ship was first turned away from Cuba, then from Canada, and finally refused admittance in New York City—in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. Forced to return to Germany, a large number of those asylum seeker perished in concentration camps. As McCutcheon put it in his song about the incident, they “sailed back home again, the German Jewish refugees just ashes in the wind.” It goes on:

*So I remember to sing this as I read the news today  
Another tale of refugees turned back and turned away  
What does our history tell us, must we live it all again  
Memory's just ashes in our souls lost in the wind*

*Still the lady of the harbor lifts her lamp for all to see  
For your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.  
Shines there high above us, a clear and constant light,  
a beacon in the darkness in the long storm-swept night.*

Some of the same arguments that surfaced when the Jewish refugees were seeking entrance are being used today to deny asylum seekers a haven, especially from south of the border: they will take jobs, they will bring disease, there are criminals among them. Or the most deceptive statement of all: “We are full. Go away.” The rule of fear is a cancer, and

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# Apologia Pro Vita Sua

by Fr. Tom Welk, C.P.P.S., Leadership Team

John Henry Newman dropped a bombshell on his contemporaries in the Anglican Church in 1843 when he resigned his position as vicar of St. Mary at Oxford and announced that he planned to join the Roman Catholic Church. Especially upset was Charles Kingsley, who mounted a scathing attack against Newman and his decision.

Newman's response was in the form of a reflective spiritual autobiography (*Apologia Pro Vita Sua*) that has become an enduring piece of literature. "This Defense of His Life" provides many insights into the life of someone who was not afraid to challenge the culture and the Church of his time.

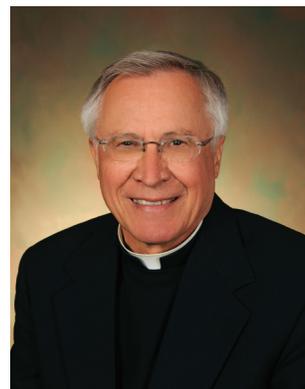
I do not intend to make this column a "defense of my own life," but more a reflection on my priesthood as I arrive at the milestone of my 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination. It seems natural for me to reflect briefly on what has been my experience in the Roman Catholic Church and with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood during the course of my priesthood and offer a few challenges of what needs to be addressed as we move forward.

My ordination in 1969 took place shortly after Vatican II. Those were heady times; Vatican II had brought about many changes. Most of us were excited about the changes, and we as newly ordained priests were in the forefront of implementing them. It also brought about confrontations with those who were not in agreement with what Vatican II called for.

These divisions and conflicts have continued into our present time. It is not uncommon for some priests to be called "Vatican II" priests, while others strive to return the Church to pre-Vatican II times, insisting on restoration of old ways rather than renewal.

With this as the backdrop, it became apparent that we as a religious community, started by St. Gaspar to be a source of renewal and reconciliation, needed to step into the breach. The decision was made several years ago to reach out to the wider Church and offer programs to continue the work of Vatican II. To further this ministry, an upgraded facility was needed at Precious Blood Center in Liberty. One of the existing houses was completely renovated, and a beautiful and functional facility is now in place. Programs have been developed and offered to a wide range of

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*Leadership, continued from page 3*

the greater Kansas City community. I am heartened by this, and believe it is what we need to be about as a religious community. It is my hope that we continue to engage in this type of ministry as we work on establishing a new creation. The web page heading for the Center states its mission well: “Precious Blood Renewal Center welcomes you. We are a safe and sacred place, offering healing and hope, renewal and reconciliation for all people.”

Another source of gratification for me as I reflect back on my 50 years as a priest of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood is the establishment and growth of the Companions Movement. Vatican II was unambiguous in its teaching that the Church is comprised of much more than the hierarchy. It is the entire people of God that must be identified as being the Church. I am proud of how Companions have modeled this. Too often the role of the laity in the Church was considered to be “pray, pay and obey.” Companions in many ways are showing us they have a vital role to play in the on-going renewal of the Church. I can only hope and pray their integral involvement in the work of the Church will continue to grow and flourish.

Where I have not seen much progress is in having a greater role for women in the wider Church. The question of women’s ordination continues to be remarkably controversial; that it is a source of great vexation for those in power is an understatement. The Church is considerably poorer for not allowing the ordination of women. So much talent not being utilized for the promulgation of the Good News of Jesus is scandalous!

Why is there such resistance from some against women being more deeply involved in the Church? It is due to the existence of the clerical culture so deeply ingrained in most corners of the religious world. Being a “cleric” (to be distinguished from priesthood), that is, being a member of the “good old boys’ club,” brings with it a great deal of power and privilege. These are not easily relinquished.

Pope Francis has spoken out against clericalism on numerous occasions. A homily given on December 13, 2016 at Casa Santa Marta forcefully sums up his

thoughts: “There is that spirit of clericalism in the Church that we feel: clerics feel superior; clerics distance themselves from people. Clerics always say: ‘This should be done like this, like this, like this, and you—go away!’ It happens when the cleric doesn’t have time to listen to those who are suffering, the poor, the sick, the imprisoned: the evil of clericalism is a really awful thing. It is a new edition of the religious authorities lording it over others.”

It is a source of pride for me that I have been a member of a religious community whose members generally have not focused on clericalism, have not considered themselves as members of a privileged class. May our efforts to be an on-going new creation continue to move us forward in this vein.

Finally, I would be remiss in this reflection not to include the seemingly never-ending clergy sexual abuse crisis. The articles published in *National Catholic Reporter* in the early 1980s first brought this out into the open. NCR was severely criticized for doing so, and was called a “rag” by some, and admonished by many others not to “air the Church’s dirty laundry.”

The hierarchical leadership of the Church almost universally refused to address this problem early on. Yes, I know that there was not a good understanding (even among mental health professionals) of what would lead some to engage in the destructive behavior of abusing minors. Yet, by the early 1990s the reality of the situation was much more apparent. And still, nothing was done! That is inexcusable. Cover up was the name of the game; it was considered more important to protect the “church” than it was to protect the children. We continue to pay the price for this cover up. Fortunately, changes seem to be on the horizon.

Rather than end my reflection on this somewhat “downer” note, I want to make it clear that I have been proud to be a member of this Community for over 55 years, serving as a priest for 50 of those years. I hope this “apologia” has been more of a reflection than it has been a defense.

Thank for your prayerful support over that span of time, and I hope you will continue to provide me with that same support in the years to come. ✠

# First Plantings and the Insistence of Life

by Dennis Coday, Director of Resources and Program Development, Precious Blood Renewal Center

Dave Blanchard, a reporter for National Public Radio, interviewed renowned travel writer Barry Lopez about his latest book, *Horizon*, which another commentator described as “a nod to heading over the edge of the familiar into the unknown.”

Lopez writes that travel is a moral act. What we encounter there, he says, can change us. *Horizon* focuses on six places that have shaped his understanding of the world. Probably not surprising to those who try to practice active contemplation, Lopez says one of those places is his own backyard. Here is a snippet of the NPR story:

BLANCHARD: The conversation he’s talking about is a way of paying attention. Traveling or at home, Lopez finds lessons in the everyday. Walking outside his house, he grabs a branch from a small tree.

LOPEZ: This is vine maple. And you can see it’s just starting to bud.

BLANCHARD: This little sign of spring tells a bigger story to Lopez.

LOPEZ: Yeah, it’s the insistence of life. This is full of I-won’t-quit energy.

BLANCHARD: Lopez then takes his focus even wider still, tying this persistent little bud to people who feel the world is coming undone and who’ve lost hope.

LOPEZ: They’re ready to give up. But you—it’s—how embarrassing to give up when everything around you is growing.

I was listening to that radio story while on my hands and knees dropping seeds into dirt, my first sowing of the season. Spring planting is always a joyous time for me, filled as it is with so much potential and hope. How can one not be an optimist in the springtime?

The elation I feel this year is even more acute because the winter was so harsh and so recent. Just a

*Editor’s note:*  
We welcome Dennis Coday to the province staff. Dennis began as director of resources and program development at the Precious Blood Renewal Center in Liberty, Missouri, in March.



couple weeks ago, we still had snow on the ground. I am really ready for this spring.

Yet this spring, I also have a slight tension in my gut, a bit of apprehension mixed with anticipation, the source of which I identify as “heading over the edge of the familiar into the unknown.” Beginning work at the Precious Blood Renewal Center in Liberty, Missouri is taking me just past the familiar into unknown territory.

I am no stranger to the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. I was introduced to the community in the early 1970s when my brother Tim joined. I studied at the former Precious Blood High School Seminary and the Rockhouse at Rockhurst College (now university). I completed a year of special formation before heading out on other journeys that took me into the profession that has claimed the last 30-plus years of my life, journalism.

I adopted journalism as a career because of my involvement with the Catholic Worker movement and the example of Dorothy Day; the practice of journalism became a channel for my work for peace and justice. Telling truth, I believe, is the heart of journalism, and truth is the foundation of building

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*Coday, continued from page 5*

community and working for a better, more peaceful world. In that sense, what I hoped to accomplish as a journalist—what the Catholic Worker cofounder Peter Maurin called “creating a new society within the shell of the old”—and how I hope my work at the Precious Blood Renewal Center develops isn’t all that different.

One thing that has changed is the pace. For years as a reporter, freelance writer, and editor, my days were governed by the ebb and flow of the daily news cycle. Though the pace at the renewal center is slower, the urgency I felt walking into the newsroom is still with me as I begin each day at the renewal center. Why? you might ask. The mission statement of the renewal center is, “We are a safe and sacred place, offering healing and hope, renewal and reconciliation for all people.” That mission most definitely speaks to the times we live in today. That is the urgency that charges my days now.

As I listened to Blanchard and Lopez on the radio, I planted two rows each of spinach and beets and three kinds of radishes, believing that the “I-won’t-quit energy” in those seeds will eventually bring forth food for my table. I have confidence this will happen—and that is a great feeling—but as I look now at the photo I snapped of my gardening, I also realize how fragile a thing hope can be. All I can see now is a plot of dirt. The photo does not show that “insistence of life”—at least not yet.

As I continued on with my chores, I couldn’t help but reflect about the act of placing seeds into the earth, covering them over, and patting them in place. In everyday conversation, we talk about hope as a longing or desire or wishful thinking. But planting seeds is hope in action. Hope is something to be done (so too are healing, reconciliation and renewal). Until beet, spinach, and radish sprouts poke through that patch of dirt, I will focus on the doing, the action of hope.

*Author’s Note: Dave Blanchard’s radio story, “Writer Barry Lopez Reflects on A Life Traveling Beyond The ‘Horizon,’” and be read and listened to at:*  
<https://n.pr/2lbw2I1>. ❖

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the combination of cruelty, ignorance, and power causes terrible damage.

The second example is a song written by McCutcheon in response to some laws being passed in a southern state that would enshrine discrimination against citizens because of their sexual orientation. As you can see, it’s words can apply to other actions and legislation and attitudes that would exclude people as well.

*I remember back, I was 8 or 9  
At Grandma’s house, it was summertime.  
Every night at 6, I’d hear her sweet, slow drawl:  
“Y’all come in...And y’all means all.”*

*I might not like you, you might not like me  
Sometimes that’s just the way things gonna be.  
But still I’ll catch you if you should fall  
‘Cause where I come from y’all means all.*

*Blood is blood and bone is bone;  
Kin is kin and home is home.  
There ain’t no difference I can recall  
that makes a difference.  
Y’all means all.*

*I’ve heard it said around these parts  
we’ve got our troubles but we’ve got hearts.  
And at the table there is a chair  
where you’re always welcome  
Sit yourself down there*

*We are not perfect, but we know it’s true  
We’re all God’s children, we are just me and you  
And one day soon we’ll hear the call  
“Y’all come in, and y’all means all.”*

People draw lines and exclude because they are afraid, judgmental, even self-righteous. It’s based on religion, ethnicity, race, sexuality, faith beliefs, politics. It’s the antithesis of our Precious Blood spirituality. I’m pretty sure that if the “lady of the harbor” could speak, she would remind us: “We are not full. Y’all means all.” ❖

# Collaboration Works: Walking With the Homeless

by Denise Murrow, Precious Blood Resource Services Director

As a ministry of accompaniment, Precious Blood Resource Services (PBRS) networks and builds relationships with local social service agencies that care for the marginalized. God calls us to help those in need, but we cannot do it alone. We must work collaboratively to provide services to keep the poorest of our population safe and do it in the spirit of love. We must walk together as service providers in order to walk with those in poverty.

The word “accompany” comes from an old French word, “acompaignier,” “take as a companion.” The word “companion” derives from the Latin words “com” (with) and “panis” (bread). As Fr. Garry Richmeier explained so well to me, truly accompanying someone therefore implies more than just a one-time interaction. It implies a significant commitment of time and energy to walk with another on the journey, and in some way, “break bread” with them. The “walking with” really is the point. If we walk with each other with respect, care, and love, we don’t have to worry about the destination. We are already there.

Recently, I observed this great spirit of love and collaboration with social service agencies in the Northland area of Kansas City, Missouri. Located north of the Missouri river, it is not considered the inner city—which is south of the river, where the poor and homeless populations are well recognized, and the shelters are oversaturated. The Northland has no shelters, but it does have a significant poor and homeless population.

This spirit of collaboration in the Northland was clearly evident when Bryanna, a young homeless woman, and her three-year-old son Amir, were referred to PBRS by St. Vincent de Paul Pantry, a ministry of St. Therese Parish in Parkville, Missouri.

St. Vincent de Paul provided emergency funds to help Bryanna and Amir, but they still faced the reality of walking the streets of Platte County in 10-degree weather in the snow, without food, shelter, or warm clothing. As I accompanied them, Bryanna was very receptive to connecting with resources, and showed



a desire to become independent and keep Amir safe. Several agencies in the Northland made it possible to get clothing, food, and overnight shelter. This made Bryanna and Amir’s struggles bearable. Fortunately, Hillcrest Ministries Platte County had an opening in their young adult transitional living program. Bryanna and Amir were provided with an apartment and a caseworker. They now had the hope of promising future.

Detra Porter, a caseworker with HPC Young Adult Housing Program, explains that they provide safe housing, supportive case management, educational/employment guidance, and life skills classes for homeless young adults and/or teen parents between the ages of 18-24. Participants may remain in the program based upon the desired life track chosen. This program is designed with different tracks including college-bound, trade specific, apprenticeship, and high school to ensure participants graduate the program with a skill set that will provide them higher than minimum wage employment. All living spaces come furnished with items that



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## A Brave Space to Move Women Forward

by Karlyn Boens, PBMR staff and coordinator of the Young Women's Initiative

Moving forward is hard. It is especially hard for women who have lost children to incarceration or gun violence, and it continues to be a burden to the daughters who face the neighborhood traumas. The truth is, if our mothers are able to muster the courage to move forward, their daughters will be able to move with them.

Last week, grandmothers, mothers, and daughters met at the Mother Brunner House as vital voices of the PBMR community. Their wishes were clear: how do we use our strengths to help one another to move forward? These are women from Communities and Relatives of Illinois Incarcerated Children (CRIIC), Women's Healing Circle, and Young Women's Initiative. For this group of women, moving forward means to find resiliency in hardship and loss. To an outsider looking in, their stories are all different and there is no logical reason for them to be interconnected. To PBMR, their stories all point to the same need: hope, healing, and radical hospitality.

"So what are your strengths?" I asked the women, and their responses were in agreement. Janice, who

recently lost her grandson Brandon to gun violence, responded by saying "Faith. We are strong because we have faith in our Creator and we have a place like the Mother Brunner House where we can pray and uplift each other." Diamond, a young mother of two from Back of the Yards, responded by saying, "Support. The struggles I face are real but with PBMR's support, I feel like I can make it". Cynthia, who has one son incarcerated and one who was taken by gun violence, responded by saying, "We are strong because we have learned how to advocate, we have learned the power of our voice."

Taking steps forward seems a little bit easier when women are given a space to share their hardship and loss. They are able to glean from one another's faith, support, and voice to begin the healing work that is needed to move forward.

It takes a brave space. It is not uncommon for women who are newcomers to PBMR's Women Forward movement to feel burdened, guilty, and

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# Pictures of Hope

by Steven Dougherty, Precious Blood Volunteer

*Steven Dougherty is a Precious Blood Volunteer serving at Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation (PBMR) in Chicago, Illinois. In the three reflections below, Steven paints pictures of hope he has encountered while working there.*

My second week in Chicago was one of the most violent in recent history. Waiting for the bus, I saw a man and a woman talking. They spoke slowly. The air was thick and hot. As she was leaving, the woman leaned in and hugged the man. Then she held him for a moment at arm's length. She looked him in the eyes, and with worry in her throat she said, "Be safe." Her words, thick in the hot air. They were desperate wounded words, heavy with fear. This was a command, a salutation, a wish—something impossible, or at least it seemed so at the time. So many people had died. Then she let the man go, freeing him from her temporary protection, hoping her wish would be enough. I thought it was beautiful how much she cared for this man, how well they must have known each other. Then the woman came to me and did the same!



In my months of volunteering at PBMR I have witnessed struggle, I have witnessed pain, and I have witnessed loss. I have been asked many times about hope. How can I stay hopeful doing the work I do at PBMR? I struggle with this, because finding hope feels like a privilege. If I say that I have hope that this community I work in will be revitalized and not gentrified, if I say that I hope the people we help can get jobs and will be treated fairly, or if I say that I hope people will stop dying so young, I am doing so only for myself. I think these things because at the end of the day I am tired. I have done what I know I can do, and the rest seems impossible, so I hope. I am not saying this is a bad thing, only that is not the thing I want it to be. Access to hope has become a privilege. It has become a way of distancing ourselves from the responsibility of the world's problems. Hope for things to get better keeps things the way they are.

But there is another side to all of this, because hope does not have to be something that is stagnant. Hope can move through us and into others. When this



happens, when hope draws us together, there is power—power for real change in the world. When people work together with a united vision of hope, when they know exactly what they want to accomplish, hope can be actualized. We can reach out with hope and work together to make sure that everything will be okay, and although it is hard, we do this work anyway.

In my months of volunteering at PBMR I have also witnessed this: a new kind of hope—a hope that does things in the world. It is a hope that people share with strangers. It is mixed with fear and pain, but it is strong enough to overcome them both. Since it was given to me by the woman at the bus stop, I have seen it all over Chicago, I have even used it myself: "Be safe." There is so much behind these words. They carry a message that you are cared for, and they carry a promise that although there is so much danger that I cannot solve, you have my protection. Anytime someone leaves the Center you hear all of this. Everyone is not always safe. In fact, our participants are rarely safe—but will still hope. We believe the impossible and together we make it a little more possible.



The man in front of you seems old but you know that time does not pass here as it does elsewhere, so in the letter to your friend you will call him worn. He is asleep. He has been asleep since you got on the bus, and since you got on the bus, the bus has filled with heat and pressure.

In the letter to your friend you will compare it to the sun—the bus—and now it grows loud. A child

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# Geraldine Downs, Precious Blood Companion

by Maureen Lahiff, Alameda, California Companion



Geraldine “Gerry” Downs was born the fourth of five children in Buffalo, New York in 1937 to a family of modest means. After attending Catholic schools from grammar school through high school, she trained and worked as a

surgical technician. Gerry married Charley Stephanski, a Navy seaman. For 17 years, she moved around the country as a Navy wife, becoming the mother of four children: Chuck, Teresa, Michael, and Annie. Later, she became grandmother to eight treasured grandchildren. The family’s last Navy post was in the San Francisco Bay Area. The changed circumstances of Charley’s retirement proved too much for Gerry and Charley’s marriage to survive.

Like so many other parents with teenagers, Gerry found herself stepping up to meet the needs of youth ministry. At St. Leander Parish in San Leandro, Gerry met a number of people who would be significant partners on her journey, including Jeffrey Keyes, director of liturgy and music. In the early 1980s, both of them travelled to Rensselaer, Indiana to study in the summer Program of Church Music and Liturgy at St. Joseph’s College, which was directed by Fr. Lawrence Heiman, C.P.P.S.

A lifelong learner, Gerry enrolled in the Master of Theological Studies program at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley. At the time, this program accepted students with solid experience who had not completed a bachelor’s degree. Gerry received her MTS in 1990. While she was a student there, she got to know Fr. Greg Comella, C.P.P.S., the director of the Precious Blood Formation House in South Berkeley, and Precious Blood candidates who were studying at the Franciscan School. Among the latter was Jeffrey Keyes, who was incorporated as a Missionary of the Precious Blood in May 1990

and ordained a priest in September of 1991.

In the early 1990s, Gerry was a member of the pastoral team at St. Augustine Parish in Oakland. As a pastoral associate, Gerry was director of the RCIA program and a regular preacher at Sunday liturgies.

When the Province of the Pacific began a Companions program, under the direction of Fr. Jeff Keyes, Gerry eagerly took part. The first Companion covenants were in May of 1993.

In fall of 1992, the Precious Blood Formation House was re-dedicated as Sonnino Mission House with Frs. Comella and Keyes in residence. Fr. Jim Franck, the provincial, was also a member of the Sonnino team. In 1994, Gerry and another Companion, Maureen Lahiff, became members of the Sonnino team. Among the ministries that Maureen and Gerry developed at Sonnino were workshops and support groups for those seeking annulments.

Gerry’s ministry of the word grew and developed as a preacher for Isaiah Ministries, which offered parish missions led by joint teams of clergy and laity. Gerry began studies for a Doctor of Ministry degree with the Graduate Theological Foundation in Indiana, which provided distance learning opportunities. Gerry’s doctoral work led to her book on preaching by women, *Reflecting the Face of God*.

Gerry collaborated with Fr. Dennis Chriszt, C.P.P.S., in the development of Precious Blood Parish Missions. Their preaching teams usually consisted of a priest, a Precious Blood sister (C.P.P.S. or A.S.C.), and a lay associate.

Gerry moved to Sonoma, California in the 1990s and became very active in St. Leo Parish as a volunteer. Her presence and spirituality inspired members of the parish community to say, in effect, “We want what you have!” Together with parishioners from St. Raphael Parish in San Rafael, who worked with Fr. Dave Matz, C.P.P.S., they came together under Gerry’s leadership to found a new

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# Inheritance

by Fr. James Smith, C.P.P.S., New Creation Commission

A few months ago, in St. Louis, priests and brothers of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood gathered to address and begin to flesh out what is “new” in this New Creation process. Fr. Jeff Kirch wonderfully summarized the gathering recently. At the end of his summary, he offered a simple question: “After discerning how the Congregation is being called to respond to the Cry of the Blood in a renewed way, am I willing to become a new creation in my own life?” Despite assembly votes, subcommittee work, presentations to Major Superiors, and the run-of-the-mill gossip of potential provincial office zip codes, this question arrives as the most important and consequential aspect of the New Creation process. There is a personal entanglement of this New Creation Process.

In one conversation a few weeks ago, a C.P.P.S. member said he heard another priest say that he hoped we didn’t let go of parishes in this New Creation process. In both provinces over the past 20 years, there are multiple parishes and ministries where we are no longer serving. There is substantial pain in leaving places we have been in for decades, if not a full century or more. There is also pain in leaving some place familiar or comfortable. Far less comfortable, though, is looking at our own personal lives and seeing how God is transforming us into something new or how God is transforming us through God’s reconciliation. As “ambassadors of Christ” with “the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:19-20), we can’t offer to others and to the world what we don’t have or practice in our own lives.

As a Society of Apostolic Life, our apostolate takes the driver’s seat for our C.P.P.S. lives. We are an active community. This is part of our founding. This is part of our gift to the church and to the world. What we do, however, flows out of who we are. We are a reconciled people. We are a renewed people. We are a redeemed people. Our community life and our spirituality speak to and nourish the ministry we do as a C.P.P.S. community. To borrow from Richard Gula’s description of morality and spirituality: our apostolate without our spirituality is rootless; our spirituality without our apostolate is disembodied.

The roots of this new creation and this reconciliation God works in us begins in baptism. Right after the pouring of the water and the anointing with chrism oil, the newly baptized hear this: “You have become a new creation and have clothed yourself in Christ. See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity. With your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven.” At most baptisms I have attended, the parish presents a simple white cloth, but the parents of the child being baptized already dressed the little one in a white baptism gown, usually handed down through multiple generations.

This process of handing down through generations is not centered around staying in the same parishes for as long as we can or never letting go of where we have always been. If that were truly the case, this article would be in Italian, and we would only be wherever Gaspar lived and ministered. The baptismal gown passed down within our C.P.P.S. community is our Precious Blood spirituality. This love that reaches out to the margins includes those who are left out or excluded in our church and our world and recognizes dignity and grace in those who would otherwise be discarded or despised. In our commitment to this community, we state publicly the stain the blood of Christ has left upon us and how it impels us to reach out in our church and our world.

The deep roots for our apostolate are not found in being at a particular parish or ministry for more than one hundred years. The deep roots for our apostolate are the entanglement of our lives in our spirituality. How has God brought me near through Christ’s blood? How has God brought about renewal within me? How has God brought about reconciliation within me and those around me? The resounding question—which might be a fair question on most days—in this whole process is, “What is ‘new’ in the new creation?” Simply put, what is “new” in this new creation is each one of us—through the waters of baptism, through our response to the continued cry of the blood, and through our own personal investment in God’s renewal and reconciling work in our own lives. The degree to which we individually

*continued on page 12*

*New Creation Commission, continued from page 11*

enter into becoming a new creation in our own lives will be the degree of success of the New Creation Process, and ultimately in our own living out of our Precious Blood spirituality.

At the end of my vacation a few months ago, I saw the play *The Inheritance*. Within the seven-hour play, and borrowing heavily from the novel *Howard's End*, a generation of 20-something and 30-something gay men grapple with the question of what they owe or have inherited from a previous generation, most of whom died from AIDS. The end of the play has a brief, maybe five-minute epilogue, with this description and concluding dialogue.

*Henry looked all around him. For the first time, he truly saw the beauty of it. Not the property itself, although the property was beautiful. No, what Henry saw was the beauty of his life. A life blessed by this house and Walter and Eric and all his friends both living and long dead. Finally...finally in that moment, Henry saw it all. The past, the present and the future all at once, all in concert, all around him.*

*Walter. Forgive me. Please forgive me, Walter. I'm so, I'm so sorry. I wasted so much time.*

*You have so much left.*

*What do I do now, Walter? Tell me what to do.*

*You do what they could not. You live.*

The task before us in the New Creation Process is much less of asking what we have inherited by those who have gone before us and more of asking what we are preparing to be inherited by those who will come after us. We look to where we have responded to the cry of the blood in the past. We look to where we are currently responding to the cry of the blood. We look to where the cry of the blood calls to us to reach out in new ways in the future. The past, the present, and the future all at once, all in concert, all around us. ✠

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*Gerry Downs, continued from page 11*

Companion group, the first initiated by a Companion.

Gerry died in October of 2016 of pancreatic cancer; a few months shy of her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her life as sister, mother, grandmother, liturgy and RCIA director, preacher, and writer clearly reflect her life of faithfulness and spiritual growth. Inspired by Precious Blood spirituality, she preached by word and example. ✠

*Collaboration, continued from page 7*

include the following: love seat, chair, kitchen table, microwave, kitchen items, bed, dresser, night table, pillow, sheets, comforter, and alarm clock/radio.

As Pope Francis writes, "Cooperation is key before the 'immense world of poverty,' and it's essential in order to have an efficient and coordinated approach. Often it is the case that cooperation with other enterprises, moved not by faith but by human solidarity, enable us to give assistance which by ourselves would have been impossible."

With the cooperation of the community and several agencies who donate and sponsor this program, Bryanna and Amir are now safe and on a journey toward independence. ✠

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*PBMR, continued from page 8*

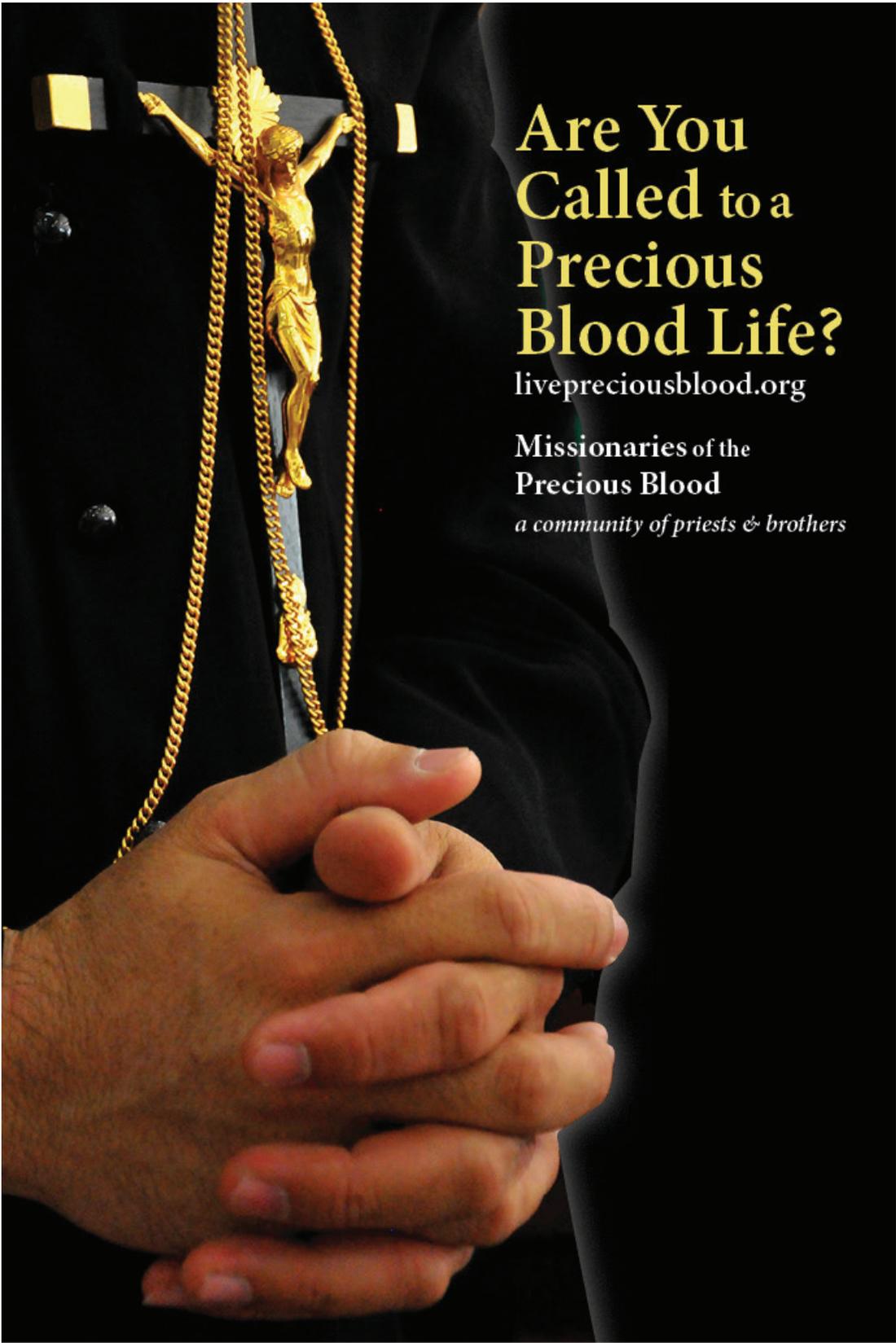
ashamed of their hardship and loss. They feel like no one understands what it means to lose a child to gun violence and/or incarceration, or what it means to live in a neighborhood plagued by violence. But when they come into PBMR and join in circle with women who face similar unsurmountable circumstances, bravery takes over and it becomes a space for all women to move forward. ✠

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*Precious Blood Volunteers, continued from page 9*

begins to scream. The heat and the pressure move through your spine and you feel beyond heavy—you feel worn.

You cannot make out the words of the child. In the letter to your friend the back of the bus will be another world, one that is burning in its closeness to the sun. All you hear is longing. Longing that makes you think to write a letter to your friend. Longing to be heard: the painful pulling apart of a body from its limbs. In the letter, you will call it gun violence in Chicago. The man in front of you who you will call worn, but who you know is old for this bus and the violence, whispers with his eyes still closed, "Hey now, it's gonna be okay." You are not sure who he means to say it to, the child or himself. In the letter to your friend he will say it to everyone because "it" is a delicate thing: the bus and the child and your spine and Chicago, but you believe him anyway. ✠



# Are You Called to a Precious Blood Life?

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Missionaries of the Precious Blood

*a community of priests & brothers*



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

“My call to the Precious Blood life is to undertake the ministry of the Word. As Reinhold Niebuhr once said, “To comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable.””

*Fr. Alan Hartway, C.P.P.S.  
Pastor, Guardian Angels Parish  
Mead, Colorado*

