

# The NEW WINE PRESS

*Motivated by the Spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ*

August 2007

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## GENERAL ASSEMBLY XIX

At the recent General Assembly held in Rome, the Kansas City Province was represented by 4 delegates: Jim Urbanic, provincial director; Lac Pham, Vietnam Mission Director; Garry Richmeier; and Mark Miller. "We elected a leadership team very representative of our cultural diversity as a community," Garry remarked. "With all the different languages, cultures, theologies, and world views at the assembly, it amazes me that we could even communicate, let alone get anything done. But what enabled unity was the common respect and care we had for each other. It is our common commitment, which we name as a commitment to the Society of the Precious Blood, which allows us to join our voices and our efforts in ministering to the people of God around the world."

Reflecting on the election of new leadership, Jim noted, "This new council will continue to emphasize our international nature and the importance of the mission and apostolate. It will take them awhile to get acquainted with each other, find a rhythm to life in Rome, and discover each other's strengths and weaknesses. The internationality of the new council cannot be matched in our history. And of course, the hospitality of the Italian province was in evidence for the entire two weeks of the Assembly."

The diversity and international makeup of the Assembly is indeed reflected in the newly elected council, consisting of Frs. Francesco Bartoloni (Italy), Moderator General; Grzegorz Ruhchniewicz (Poland), First Councilor and Vice-Moderator; Felix Mushobozi, (Tanzania), second councilor; Bill Nordenbrock (United States), third councilor; and Lucas Rodriguez, (Spain), fourth councilor. More information about the Assembly can be found beginning on page 3 of this issue.

The prayers of the Kansas City Province are extended to the new council, along with our thanks to the former Moderator General and Council for their service: Frs. Barry Fischer, Francesco Bartoloni, Robert Schreiter, Jerome Stack, and Louis Filipe Cardoso Fernandes.



*Delegates to the XIX  
General Assembly during  
one of the voting sessions.*



My  
BACK PAGES  
pages 12, 2

GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
page 3

I LOVED THEM  
page 6

ST. CHARLES  
UPDATE  
page 8

ERASE THE  
STIGMA  
page 9

TRANSITIONS  
page 11

BACK PAGES, continued from page 12...

some of the new. I didn't preside at this Mass, but I did observe the awkwardness of unfamiliarity and the almost total passivity on the part of the laity which this liturgy requires. One elderly member of the congregation remarked to me on the way out, "I'm glad we don't do that every Sunday." And my father, in a moment of prescience before Mass began, remarked to me, "This is going to seem weird."

I go into all this detail because the experience of that weekend has been on my mind as this issue has been taking shape. From new international leadership, to St. Charles Center (and my recent visit with the men there), to the article about Larry Cyr, I have been reminded of where we are from. In so many areas of our lives, there are so-called "settlers" who preceded us.

Despite the appropriateness of the word—at least as it applies to the park in Willard—it is a misleading term, however. To "settle" suggests something permanent, and to some extent it is. But communities like Willard and religious communities like the C.P.P.S. began because of pioneers who tried something new. In the beginning there is a settling, roots begin to go deep, but only so growth can take place above ground.

A community of any kind continues to flourish as each generation chooses to be settlers. That means we are always pioneers in our own way, seeking something new. In our context, we speak of responding to "the signs of the times." We can see the way only because people before us have made it possible, and those who come after us will say the same about us.

To cut ourselves off completely from all of our roots would have the same result as doing likewise with a tree. But to never get beyond the roots would be just as deadly. The life of any community is always a lot of the old along with some of the new—but always some of the new.

The people who founded Willard consist of more than those few who first broke open the earth and picked the rocks and planted crops and started families. The founders are there in each subsequent generation as well, and the change that comes with growth is inevitable. As we were driving through the countryside one afternoon, my father remarked to me, "I wonder what Mom and Dad would think if they could see how things have changed?" (Actually, thanks to the large recent influx of Amish families, many of the farms now would look quite familiar to my grandparents!)

It's a complement to us as a religious congregation that we can say, "I wonder what Gaspar would think if he could see how things have changed?" Thanks to him and all those who followed faithfully, we have roots as well as a future. Our heritage can be found in the Rome of the past, both as a church and as a congregation. But neither has stayed put. Our heritage as a community, our pioneers, includes our elder members, many of them now in various stages of retirement and health. Some day each of us will in their own right be remembered as a pioneer, someone who continued the tradition of a settler, but was never satisfied with just roots. For our community, there will never be just one "Settlers' Park."

At one point during the Willard celebration I encountered someone who looked at me with a bit of uncertainty and said, "I'm picking up on some Bayuk DNA here, but I can't come up with a name." Hopefully that could be said as well of us as C.P.P.S., "I'm picking up on some Precious Blood DNA here." It shows!

I'm from Willard, but I don't live there. It lives in me. I'm "from Gaspar," but I don't live there. He lives in me. So do the rest who went ahead of me, of us. They all live in us. 🙏

## THE NEW WINE PRESS

*Kansas City Province*

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, 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, together with Precious Blood Companions, we strive to serve all people—especially the poor—with care and compassion, hope and hospitality.

*The New Wine Press* seeks to remain faithful to the charism of our founder, St. Gaspar, and the spirituality of the Blood of Christ with its emphasis on reconciliation, renewal and refounding. We accept and encourage unsolicited manuscripts and letters to the editor.

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# GENERAL ASSEMBLY XIX IN WORDS AND PICTURES

*[Editor's note: This text is an edited version of the official Message of the XIX General Assembly. Because it describes well the work of the Assembly, I have included it here, along with photos from the gathering.]*

We have spent two weeks in Rome, in prayer, study, and dialogue. In the spirit of our Founder, St. Gaspar, we have attempted “to be alert to discover the signs of the times.”

As we listened to the reports of the Moderator General and of the Directors of the Provinces, Vicariates, and Missions, it became clear to us how crucial good leaders are for the health of our community life as well as for the vitality of our mission. Our Directors shared with us the strengths and successes of their Provinces, Vicariates, and Missions, and were candid in assessing the areas where change and growth are needed.

During the first week of our gathering we prepared carefully for the elections. We wanted to have a clear sense of the challenges to our apostolic life as well as to our internal life as a Congregation so that we could identify those qualities that would be needed by leaders in our general government to help all of our members to address these challenges.

We believe that we have elected men who will be servant leaders, helping us to be faithful to our charism.

In the revision of our Normative Texts, we have tried to be faithful to the mandate of the XVIII General Assembly, which called us to “review the Constitutions and Statutes to include language of mission, reconciliation, and internationality as well as to better reflect who we are today.”

After hearing the reports of the Major Superiors and Directors of our Missions we spent a day in dialogue with Fr. Séamus Freeman, former superior general of the Pallotines. He reminded us that authentic apostles are mystics and that they must incarnate the love of God through selfgiving. He called us to remember the words of John Paul II: to make the Church the home and the school of communion. He also challenged us to deepen our sense of identity as members of the Congregation and to genuine collaboration with one another and with the lay faithful.

In response to his presentations, three of the members of the Assembly offered their response in a panel discussion, basing their comments on what they had heard in the reports from the Major Superiors and Directors of our Missions. Although there have been successes and substantial growth in many areas, there remain pressing issues that we should address.

Evangelization and re-evangelization must be priorities for our Congregation. Proclaiming the Word is at the heart of our mission. Our Normative Texts remind us that we are dedicated “to the service of the Church through the apostolic and missionary activity of the word” and also state that the Congregation “dedicates itself to the ministry of the word according to the spirit of our Founder.” Many spoke of the urgency of proclaiming the gospel especially among the young, who constitute such a large part of the population of many developing countries.

Evangelization is not limited to the ministry of preaching the word of God in the narrow sense. It also involves proclaiming the gospel in a variety of ways.

Pursuing justice, seeking peace, and care for creation are all part of evangelization or re-evangelization. We have noted the need for a ministry of reconciliation, a work that certainly is central to our Precious Blood spirituality.

We recognized that the ministry of the word also involves the powerful witness of the word of our lives, especially the witness of community. If we do not live the message we preach, our witness will not be effective.

Vocational and formation ministries continue to be areas that call for attention. For some areas of the Congregation, the decline of vocations has been significant. For other areas, vocations have grown. We need to explore together how to attract more men to the C.P.P.S.

We also must seek ongoing evaluation and improvement in the formation of members, not only prior to their incorporation and/or ordination, but as a

*See Assembly, continued on the next page...*



*Delegates and guest of General Assembly XIX. Sixteen provinces, vicariates, and missions were represented, including the countries of United States, India, Italy, Tanzania, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Austria, Poland, Chile, Canada, Brazil, Peru, Guatemala, Mexico, Columbia, Guinea-Bissau, and Vietnam.*

## Assembly continued...

lifelong task. Issues of international or interregional formation must be explored, not only to provide a sufficient number of candidates for a good experience in formation, but also to foster that “vocational identity” named by Fr. Freeman. Members also noted the importance of formation for living a healthy celibate life for candidates and members alike.

Our spiritual life and the spirituality of the Blood of Christ must be central to the lives of each member and to our communities. We cannot “concretize the desire of the heart of God” in our ministry unless we know God’s heart



*Fr. Jim Urbanic with Fr. Robert Schreiter, a member of the outgoing general council from the Cincinnati Province.*

through our prayer, through the mysticism of contemplation which is our vocation. As a society of apostolic life we are oriented to action, but we must constantly remind ourselves that our action must be

rooted in “the still point in a turning world” as one modern poet has written.

The refounding of our Congregation—understood as the ongoing renewal that is the hallmark of any healthy religious congregation—must find its ground in personal spiritual renewal and the spiritual renewal of local communities. We recognize that refounding is not mainly a matter of modifying structures but rather of dreaming new dreams and having new visions.

The relationship between “north” and “south” in the Congregation continues to be a source of both blessing as well as of some tension. The South, understood as those areas of the C.P.P.S. mainly south of the equator that are “developing” countries, has generally seen a growth in members and in a willingness of those members to leave their countries to serve in other cultures. This missionary spirit is certainly a wonderful testimony to all the members.

At the same time, many in the South wonder if those in the North really understand them, their cultures, their aspirations, and ask if their “older brothers” in the North trust them to carry forward the charism and mission of our Founder.

Beyond this, there is also the question of the sharing of resources and of self-sufficiency. Some units in developing nations or areas lack the resources to become completely independent. At the same time, older units in

the North are concerned about the decrease in numbers and possible loss of the resources that help sustain the younger units in developing countries.

Collaboration received much attention in our discussions. True collaboration means trusting in the wisdom and skills of others, treating them as equals in planning and carrying out our mission. Developing collaborative models of leadership and of living and working together continues to be a pressing need.

In this regard, collaboration with the laity was an important thread running through the dialogue. The role of the brother in the C.P.P.S. could be especially significant in promoting such collaboration. At the same time, we recognize that the laity need to develop their own unique manner of living Precious Blood spirituality.

Finally, the Assembly reviewed and revised our Normative Texts in response to Resolution 13.4 of the XVIII General Assembly. Among the more significant revisions, we have called Mission Directors to full participation with deliberative voice in the meetings of the Moderator General and General Council with the Provincial and Vicariate Directors. Missions will also be able to elect delegates to future General Assemblies.

As we conclude our Assembly, we look to the future with hope. We have elected new leaders at the level of general government for the next six years. We trust in their collective wisdom, skills, and above all in their commitment to the Lord, to the people of God, and to our Congregation. We also trust that all of our members and lay associates will work with them as fellow servants of God’s word and God’s kingdom.

We propose the following tasks for the new Moderator General and General Council for the years ahead. We group them together under the categories that we have come to call the “three pillars” of our Congregation: mission, community, and spirituality.



*Frs. Garry Richmeier and Mark Miller, Kansas City Province delegates, during a break in the action.*

1. We call on our general government to strengthen the pillar of *Mission* by:

- Developing a Congregation-wide understanding of the theology and spirituality of mission today.
- Leading the Congregation into a deeper sense of vocation to the “new evangelization” or re-evangelization that gives primacy to preaching the word in all its forms,

to the Eucharist, and to the option for the poor and marginalized.

- Calling all members to recognize that the ministry of the word of God must include being a prophetic voice for justice.

- Continuing to give attention to such justice issues as human rights, the integrity of creation, and migration.

- Addressing issues raised by the exchange of members between Provinces, Vicariates and missions.

- Promoting new initiatives in ministry even as we leave older commitments.

- Fostering pastoral ministry with the burgeoning youth population.

- Giving greater attention to the victims of violence and to eradicating the causes of violence.

- Inviting the laity to authentic collaboration in our ministry and to helping the lay faithful to fulfill their role in the ministry of the Church in the spirit of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council.

- Fostering discussion of and creative response to the declining numbers of active members in the North.

- Working toward reconciliation at all levels within the family, the Congregation, the Church, and all of society.

2. We call on our general government to strengthen the pillar of *Community* by:

- Fostering the dialogue among all units of our Congregation by ensuring a healthy flow of information to promote accurate mutual understanding.

- Addressing issues of cross-regional and international formation of a C.P.P.S. identity as part of both initial and ongoing formation.

- Deepening the renewal of community life, for the sake of our members and as a witness to our mission.

- Assuring the ongoing education of our members regarding healthy celibate living and the prevention of destructive behavior such as sexual and substance abuse.

- Continuing to support vocation ministry.

- Promoting ongoing formation among our members.

- Continuing to support and encourage the vocation of brother in the C.P.P.S.

- Strengthening relationships with our lay associates.

- Encouraging reflection on dealing with an aging membership in some areas.

- Building the economic and leadership resources in the South that will enable all units of the South to achieve autonomy as Provinces.



*Fr. Lac Pham  
welcoming the new  
Moderator General.*

3. We call on our general government to strengthen the pillar of *Spirituality* by:

- Working toward the spiritual renewal of the Congregation as a means of re-entering the work of “refounding.”

- Continuing the development of Precious Blood spirituality, especially around the theme of caritas.

- Helping the laity to develop a Precious Blood spirituality adequate to their lay vocation.

- Reinforcing the awareness of the mystical ground of our apostolic life and helping members to live a deeper life of the Spirit.

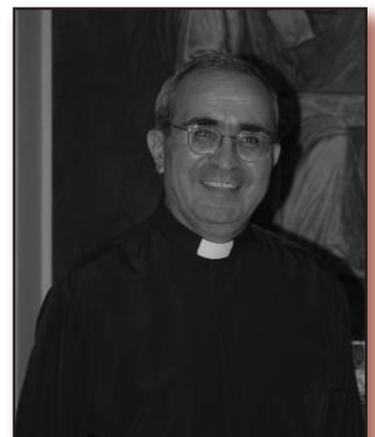
In the chapel in which we have celebrated Eucharist together each day of the Assembly, we have had before us the image of Gaspar holding a chalice of the Blood of Christ, blood which flowed from the pierced side of Jesus. In his encyclical letter *Deus caritas est*, the Holy Father calls us to meditate on this very scene: “By contemplating the pierced side of Christ, we can understand the starting-point of this Encyclical Letter: ‘God is love.’ It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move.”

As Missionaries of that Blood, we must keep before us that image of love as self-giving. This is love, as our Holy Father says in the same passage, “in its most radical form.” We commit ourselves and invite our confreres to making this love in the heart of God concrete in our local communities, in our ministry, among our lay associates, and in our world. This is the path along which our life and our love must move.

We call upon our newly elected Moderator General and General Councilors to call us to fidelity to this vision of love and to the charism of St. Gaspar, which was a particular way of incarnating and understanding the mystery of God’s love. It is a charism that remains valid and life-giving today.

We commend our new leaders and our Congregation to Mary, Woman of the New Covenant; to St. Gaspar, our Founder; and to St. Francis Xavier, our patron.

Rome, 27 July 2007 🙏



*Fr. Francesco Bartoloni, C.P.P.S.,  
Moderator General*

# “I LOVED THEM AND THEY LOVED ME”

Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.

*[Editor's note: During a recent visit with our members at St. Charles, I had the opportunity to interview Larry Cyr, one our 2007 jubilarians.]*

Fr. Larry Cyr, C.P.P.S. is observing his 70th year of profession, but he is quick to point out that his association with the community goes back 75 years, to the summer of 1933 in Mishawaka, Indiana when he met a Precious Blood priest for the first time. “He was a friend of the pastor in Mishawaka, and he had a pamphlet about Brunnerdale. He gave me that pamphlet and I liked it. It’s a missionary community. Oh my, I thought, then I can see the whole world. A missionary community. So I sent in my registration. But they were too filled up, they couldn’t take me. Then after my first year of high school at home I finally went to Brunnerdale.”

In 1918, Larry was born in Fowler, Indiana. In 1925, the family moved to Mishawaka where Larry attended St. Joseph Catholic School. “I didn’t know anything about the Precious Blood community as I grew up. In seventh and eighth grade, I was thinking a little about the priesthood. I had a cousin who was in the Ft. Wayne Diocese, so I thought about that. The sister in the eighth grade knew that I had this inclination and she wanted me to be a Franciscan. At that age all I could think was, I’ll become cooped up in their monastery for the rest of my life. I don’t want that.”

So Brunnerdale it was. Larry remembers it well: “I started the seminary in the middle of the depression. We were so poor during that time; we lost our home; my dad lost his his job in the factory. Two of my sisters were working, the only income we received then. Dad was so put out that he had to depend on his children to keep the family going. He would do anything—dig ditches if needed—anything he could think of. Finally he obtained a job at Notre Dame as a janitor in one of the halls.”

With a smile and a chuckle, Larry admits to being “kind of ornery” at home. “My mother said, they won’t keep you. But I said, no matter what happens I’m going to stay at least one year. And that was the worst year I ever had. I had so many punishments. I had to wash those tile walls for three months straight during breaks.” When asked what he did do merit this, Larry explained, “Oh, there were these little disturbances in the dormitory. The guy next to me, he had a pillow and he hit me over the head with it. The lights went on and the prefect saw that. He said you two go down and see Fr. Gaulrapp. So we

went down and knocked on his door; he wasn’t in his room. Well, we were told to go down and see him, so we sat down on the floor next to the door. He got back late that night. And then the next morning in class the English professor asked me a question. I answered it very correctly. He said, ‘Cyr, that’s pretty good for the little sleep you had last night.’ That was the worst year I had as far as penalties go.” Larry remembered further: “There were about five of us guys on penalty, while everyone else was outside during free time. Fr. Joe Lutkemeier used to come around once in a while and give us some cookies while we were working. He had pity on us.”

If the marks for conduct were less than exemplary, studies proved more fertile ground. Larry says it was a “breeze,” in part because he had Latin in the public high school. Mathematics, however, was his best subject during the first year, with a 99 or 100 in every exam. He admits that the second year was a little more difficult then, as many things were new to him.

In the midst of all the activities of a high school seminary, Larry says he remained confident of his vocation. “I always thought I had a vocation. But it was when I was at St. Joe College in Rensselaer, after my sophomore year, that I knew for sure this was what I wanted, and what God wanted me to do. I never wavered after that.” Larry graduated from college in 1939 and after completing studies at St. Charles Seminary, he was ordained there on December 10, 1944. He explained: “We were ordained early because of the call for chaplains in the service. We had more chaplains in the service than any other religious community in the country—44 chaplains in the armed services. The first chaplain to die in the war was one of our men, Fr. Clem Falter. He died in the invasion of Africa.”

Three weeks after he was ordained Larry became a substitute pastor in Goodland, Indiana while the pastor was on sick leave. Then he was sent up to Detroit for three years, where there were 25 members of the community, including five of his classmates, “in the toughest places that there were. None of the diocesan assistants wanted to go to those places. I remember my pastor was called ‘The Iron Duke.’ He was from Germany. He had lost three diocesan priests who were assistants before I came there. They couldn’t stand living with him. So they just left. When I got there, the first assistant was

a diocesan priest. He was leaving for vacation and he told me, ‘Larry, I’m not coming back.’ And he didn’t. He sent a telegram from vacation to tell the pastor.”

Larry described his experiences at length: “That pastor lasted only one year. He was older. He said one Mass a week, the last Mass on Sunday, went to his cabin until Tuesday night. Then the only time we would ever see him during the week would be at supper. He stuck to his room, and we had to do all the business in the parish. He didn’t want to be bothered at all. We did the parish newsletter. We had a Catholic grade school and high school. There were eight hospitals in that parish alone, and I know I was called out for at least three night calls every week. And then I taught in the grade school. The boys there wanted to get into the Catholic Basketball League. No one had ever taken the time to get them into it before, but it was too late the year I got there to get a new team in. So I got a group of seventh graders and trained them, because they would be eligible for the league the next year. I trained them and played them against freshmen and sophomores and juniors and seniors in high school. They were gungho, really good, and we won the city championship. Eighty schools in the league and we won the city championship. That’s over 50 years ago and I still keep contact with some of those kids.”

He continued, “I think I had 80 converts that came into the church in the three years that I was there. I tried to get a class for converts, but everybody had different schedules, so I had to have individual instructions for all of them. Sometimes it would be eight hours a day. I still have contacts with some of them too. I loved it there. However, after those three years, suddenly on a Wednesday I got a letter from Fr. Oberhauser, the provincial, and he said, ‘Be in Dayton next Wednesday.’ All those things I had lined up, and all that work to do. I had to rearrange everything, the whole schedule, and I really didn’t get a farewell there. Back then provincials never consulted you before changes at all. One week only. That was hard, that was difficult.”

Larry moved to Dayton and served as chaplain at Dayton State Hospital, which at the time had about 1900 patients. He explained—again with a smile—that after three years he mentioned to the provincial that he was glad he had never been sent to teach. “And that was the

next job he gave me, teaching at the motherhouse of the Precious Blood sisters in Dayton—while continuing my chaplaincy ministry.” After three years there, he moved to St. Charles to teach in the seminary. However, they soon realized that Larry did not have a theology degree—or a bachelors degree. During the next several years he obtained his bachelors in Psychology from the University of Dayton and his Licentiate in Theology from the Angelicum in Rome. That led to six years of teaching at St. Charles Seminary.

This was followed by an assignment to what is now Newman College in Wichita, Kansas. During this time, the American Province was divided and Larry was now a member of the new Kansas City Province. In addition to teaching theology at the college, he became chaplain at the ASC motherhouse. It was during this time that Larry



*Fr. Larry Cyr, c.p.p.s.*

was serving as vice-provincial, and when Danny Schaeffer was elected Moderator General in 1971, Larry became the second provincial of the Kansas City Province. He left Wichita then and served eight years in his new role.

During his service as provincial, Larry continued to develop the Precious Blood presence in Texas which Fr. Schaeffer had begun with Sam Homsey and Gus Hanchak. “Eventually there were eleven of us down there,” Larry explained. “During my time as provincial the bishop down there had invited me to move there after my term was over. I didn’t want to displace anyone, so that was my only condition. I said, yes,

that will be a new experience for me; I’ll go. When I left office in May and moved to Texas the bishop had retired, Bishop Levin. He was a good guy. I remember when George Fey and Rich Kolega were moving into St. Mary’s in San Angelo, there was an elderly man who showed up and started helping them bring stuff into the house. They found out afterwards that it was Bishop Levin. He was a great guy. He would call Homsey ‘that damn Sam.’ He would say, ‘I like him but I can’t do anything with him.’” More laughter.

Larry spent his first months in Texas helping out in various parishes, since the diocesan administrator was not making any pastoral appointments. In November of 1979, just after Thanksgiving all that changed. “I received a call from the vicar general and he said, ‘Will you go down to

*See I Loved Them, continued on page 10...*

## ST. CHARLES UPDATE

In January of this year, St. Charles Senior Living Community—formerly St. Charles Seminary—was dedicated. It continues to be home to many active and retired community members (and some retired diocesan priests), and now it is a senior living center open to lay people as well. The first phase of renovation at St. Charles is completed, which included the remodeling of the main building, redone hallways, new one and two bedroom suites throughout, and a new completely accessible entrance at the back of the building with an elevator adjacent to the original one.

Currently there are eight members of the Kansas City Province who reside at St. Charles Center: Frs. Larry Cyr,



*Province members living at St. Charles, from l: Frs. Al Herber, Al Fey, Larry Cyr, Bernard Diekhoff, and Leonard Goettemoeller.*

Bernard Diekhoff, Al Fey, George Fey, Al Herber, Leonard Goettemoeller, Bernard Mullen, and Al Jungwirth. They speak highly of the Center and the care and community which they share—not to mention the great food! The newly remodeled suites are spacious, attractive, and comfortable. The redone hallways, with carpeting and furniture, provide ample quiet, replacing the former noisy corridors.

According to Fr. James Seibert, C.P.P.S., director of St. Charles Center, the second stage of development is expected to begin soon, and will include all the other buildings, except for the infirmary. The long range plan includes a new building to use as an infirmary, with the present infirmary then remodeled for assisted living. The ultimate goal is a total continuum of care from independent living through nursing care.

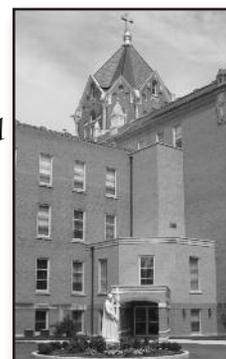
Fr. Seibert explained that phase two will include new roofs and windows for all the buildings other than the chapel, which will encompass the dining room building, the old convent—which will become the guest and hospitality house—and all the connecting hallways and walkways. The old convent will provide visitors with a comfortable and private place to stay, and also a transition space for members whose apartment might not be immediately available when they move to St. Charles. Second floor will be made into small apartments for this purpose, and the ground level will consist of motel like rooms for visitors or families who come for funerals.

Additionally, phase two will include remodeling of both the large and small dining rooms. The small dining room will be redone to provide, in Fr. Jim's words, "a dining experience rather than just going through a line and getting good food; we want to make it more of a fraternity or comraderie, to have a dining experience. The idea is to create islands for hot food, salads, desserts and the like. Once residents get their food, they will then come in to the carpeted area, a nicer atmosphere, a dining room which is more like a nice restaurant." The large dining room, in addition to being used occasionally for dining, will be remade into a more pleasant and multipurpose room, with a new ceiling, air conditioning, a meeting area that can be divided, and screens available for presentations. The downstairs auditorium will also be remodeled, thus providing another large meeting area. Another elevator will be installed by the infirmary to provide another handicap entrance in that part of the building. Also included there will be a new parking lot and a covered entrance, close to the infirmary.

The chapel will be remodeled to make it more handicap accessible, especially the sanctuary. Bathrooms will be installed, and the main doors will be replaced by automatic doors, as the present heavy doors are hard to open for many. The high altar will be moved down and forward and redone to make it more square, thus providing the option of the presider facing the side sanctuary seating for daily Mass, or the front main seating on Sundays.

Fr. Seibert noted that sound will be the big job. As anyone who has been there can attest, it is very difficult to hear in the chapel because of the reverberations. They have contracted the services of an acoustician, who has studied the structure and has suggested putting acoustical plaster on what is a barrel shaped ceiling, in order to catch the sound. He said they are quite confident this will solve the problem, having tried about 5 different sound systems in the past which haven't worked.

Is there a phase three? According to Fr. Seibert, if there would be it would be apartments or some kind of townhouses around the lakes: "We



*New accessible entrance with a statue of St. Gaspar modeled after the original at Via Narni in Rome.*

*See St. Charles, continued on page 10...*

# ERASE THE STIGMA, NOT THE SUBJECT OR THE SCAR

Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S.

This summer I had the privilege of speaking at a conference on mental illness and suicide. The title of the conference, “Erase the Stigma,” reflected the desire of the sponsors and participants to confront the stigma that still exists in our society regarding mental illness and the moral stigma that some still hold toward victims of suicide.

One of the startling statistics offered during the conference was that the suicide rate of suburban white males is among the highest for any demographic group. A Pennsylvania study, *Suicide in the Suburbs: The Quiet Tragedy*, found that white males between the ages of 20 and 59 accounted for 72% of all suicides reported. The statistic called to mind an article by Professor Roberto Goizueta of Boston College in *America* magazine last year when he noted how the suicide rate of suburban white males “is the corollary of the murder rate among inner-city African-American and Latino males. The former is a direct result of our failure as a society to confront the latter. Tragically, our teenagers are taking quite seriously the post-modern call for the ‘erasure of the subject.’”

A study released on July 18, 2007 by the Justice Policy Institute, a Washington-based think tank that promotes alternatives to incarceration, confirms Goizueta’s observation. The report by Judith Greene and Kevin Prams says Chicago and Los Angeles “are losing the war on gangs because they focus on law enforcement and are short on intervention.” In commenting on the study for the Associated Press, Judith Greene said, “We’re talking about 12-, 13-, 14-, 15-year olds whose involvement in gangs is likely to be ephemeral unless they are pulled off the street and put in prison, where they will come out with much stronger gang allegiances.”

None of this is surprising since our consumer culture tells us, “Don’t take time for the pain,” be strong and don’t appear weak. So many of us try to insulate ourselves from the wounded among us since the sight of those who are vulnerable threaten our sense of invincibility. That is why we try to make the poor, the homeless, and the mentally ill invisible; and why we continue to incarcerate young offenders rather than addressing the underlying issues in poor neighborhoods that contribute to involvement in gangs. As Goizueta writes, “Get them off the streets so that we won’t have to see them and their uncomfortable wounds. By denying death, we inflict it.”

The denial of our wounds helps to create a stigma

that those who suffer from mental illness must deal with but also confronts those society deems as most vulnerable or dispensable. In biology, a stigma on one’s anatomy is “a small spot, a mark, or a scar.” In religious or spiritual terms, stigma is the root for stigmata that refers to the wounds of crucifixion on the body of Christ. These wounds or scars were visible on the body of Jesus after his resurrection. The marks of crucifixion became his means of identifying himself to his disciples as the crucified but risen Lord, his way of calling his followers to participate in the paschal mystery and become a new creation.

The image from Scripture that has moved to the center of my understanding of how we must erase the stigma but not the scar is found in John 20:19-29 when Jesus appears to his disciples huddled in fear in the upper room after his resurrection. As Professor Goizueta points out, when Jesus shows up he doesn’t say, “Let bygones be bygones” or “Forgive and forget” but rather “forces them to confront the painful consequences of their abandonment and betrayal.” Jesus enters that upper room not to condemn the disciples for running scared, for being afraid, for their bold talk yet feeble witness, but to reconcile with them.

Reconciliation comes from the victim. Jesus, the paschal victim, enters that upper room not to hold an upper hand—though he does hold the upper hand and could have commanded his disciples to fall on their knees and apologize before he forgave them. Instead he breathes on them, offers them forgiveness, and then shares a meal with them. Jesus confronts them with their sins of the past but invites them to move on, to move past or beyond it, to not lose hope but to keep mercy moving in their lives: “Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them.”

“If it is truly the victory of life over death,” Goizueta writes, “the resurrection must vindicate and restore not just the life of the individual called Jesus Christ. The resurrection must also vindicate and restore the relationships that themselves have helped define Christ—his compassionate relationships with the poor, sinners,

*See Stigma, continued on page 11...*



*The New Creation*  
REFLECTIONS FROM THE  
PRECIOUS BLOOD MINISTRY  
OF RECONCILIATION

*I Loved Them, continued from page 7...*

Coleman for the weekend; the pastor is in the hospital.' So I went down there on Friday. After Mass on Saturday evening, I got a call, 'The pastor died; will you stay to help out?' For various reasons, I was the fifth priest there in the past five years. So the people said 'Stay awhile.' And I was there almost 26 years!"

It is quite obvious when talking with Larry that his years in Coleman were the best of his many years of priesthood. At least four times he said, "I just loved it there." He explained: "I loved it there through 26 years. What I treasure the most is closeness to the people. They were all my family. Closeness to all the members of the parish, not to just a few. In some of the other places, like Detroit, we only got to know a few of the people. But in Coleman I knew everybody. It was only 250 families, and I got to know everybody."

During his last few years in Coleman, Larry coped with a number of health challenges, including a pacemaker implant, quadruple bypass and major stomach surgery. He added,

*"All in all, I have no regrets, not a one. This is the happiest life I could ever have had, I believe."*

"Then I started fainting during Mass. Always the Sunday morning Mass. Finally I went to a heart doctor who told me, 'Don't worry, that comes and goes. All they have to do is have you lie down.' Of course the first time it happened, I fell to the floor, so after that they stationed two men next to me to catch me. But that first time, boy, that shocked them. After that they watched very closely, and if my face started getting white, they knew. Once I actually had to finish Mass lying down. A lady said to me afterward, 'That's the first time I ever saw a priest say Mass lying down.' There was one time, as I was being carried out on a stretcher I said, 'Now you know why we need more priests!' One particular nurse at the hospital would often remark upon hearing the ambulance siren, 'Oh that must be Fr. Cyr again.'"

Larry says it was hard to leave, but of course the provincial realized that at some point he couldn't stay any longer. "I had hoped that if I had to retire, I could go live with Joe Uecker, for example, and be sacramental minister. I would like to have done that, but it wasn't possible anymore. Too many things were happening. But I came here to St. Charles and it was just like home. This is a great place here. Great care. This is the best place I could be. I can't think of any better place for me. It's like being

home. I spent six years here as a student, then I came back to teach here for six years. So when I came back here, gosh, some of the guys here were classmates from 50 and 60 years ago, so I knew them. I know everybody here."

When asked about his years as provincial and what he looked back on with the most satisfaction, Larry replied, "I made it a point to see every member every year. We had somebody in Kentucky, somebody in California, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Iowa, Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas. I would drive 44,000 miles a year on my car. We were spread out."

In response to another question, he said, "The best time of my life as a priest was those 26 years in Texas, and Coleman. I had a couple visiting me here just last weekend from Coleman. One of my aims in Coleman was to get the Anglos and Hispanics working together, and today they are, not like in some parishes. All in all, I have no regrets, not a one. This is the happiest life I could ever have had, I believe. I volunteered to go the missions, but they never sent me—but no regrets, none. I liked everywhere I was, but I was most at home in Coleman."

When asked what he would most like people to know about his many years in the Precious Blood community, Larry replied, "That I loved them and they loved me. It has been a real experience of life for me, and I hope I can live a few more years." 🙏

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*St. Charles, continued from page 8...*

could have the option of more independent living for those who prefer that. We could have that there, a little village of some kind. Then they could come in for meals if they wanted. At that point, then, and that will take a number of years, we could move into the assisted living and nursing care for everyone."

Fr. Jim expressed his appreciation for the financial support from the Kansas City Province, and added: "When you are a priest or brother here it doesn't matter what province you are from. Everyone has all the privileges, everyone is treated the same, no distinctions. Everything is done with precedence as the guide, including diocesan priests. Everyone is treated the same. I appreciate the contribution and hopefully phase two will get going soon. On August 9th we have a meeting with the general contractors to get the final figures, we should be able start fairly soon after that." 🙏

# TRANSITIONS

## *Missionaries of the Precious Blood*



Newly elected members of the General Curia, from l: Fr. Bill Nordenbrock, third counselor; Fr. Felix Mushobozi, second counselor; Fr. Francesco Bartoloni, Moderator General; Fr. Grzegorz Rubchniewicz, First Counselor and Vice-Moderator. Fr. Lucas Rodriguez (right), fourth counselor, was not present for the photo.



## *We Remember*

Joe Summers, husband of Albia Companion Jan Summers is undergoing chemo.

Sedalia-Warsaw-Warrensburg Companion Shirley Schlobohm hospitalized in serious condition.

Linda Tracy, daughter-in-law of Centerville Companion Phyllis Tracy is in intensive care with health problems.

+John Rowe, brother-in-law of Albia Companion Madeline Belzer.

+Fr. William O'Neill, C.P.P.S., Cincinnati Province, died July 23, 2007.

+Sister Andrée Fries, C.P.P.S., died July 14, 2007.

+Sister Meg Kopish, A.S.C., died July 29, 2007.

+Angela Volkmer, stepmother of Fr. Mike Volkmer, died Friday, August 3, 2007.

## *Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood*

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood recently held elections for their international leadership team:

Sr. Maria Ingeborg Müller (Superior General)

Sr. Mary Paul Wamatu (Vicaress General)

Sr. Helena Hyo Sun Kang

Sr. Maria Georg Loos

Sr. Redemptrix Chimutima

## *Address Book Changes*

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Marie Trout  
Companion Office  
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*Stigma*, continued from page 9...

prostitutes, and other 'unsavory characters.'" Ultimately, he adds, "the resurrection is the victory of companionship over abandonment, the victory of community over estrangement."

The stigma of the soul, the scar left by the loss of a mother or brother or sister or father or friend is never erased. The wound may heal but the scar survives. We will never forget. So we want to erase the stigma, the stereotypes, the attitude of disrespect and prejudice toward those in our society who are most vulnerable, but we don't want to "erase the subject" or the scar that tells the story of a life. As Professor Goizueta writes, "It is not the privileged but the abandoned who can teach us about community, not the satiated but the hungry who can teach us about bread, not the victors but the crucified victims who can teach us about resurrection. The act of solidarity with the wounded other is an acknowledgment of our common woundedness, our common powerlessness."

Death stops us in our tracks and reminds us we are not in charge, we are not in control. It is not easy being in this place of vulnerability. But as Fr. Ronald Rolheiser reminds, "After the resurrection, we see Christ, time and again, going through locked doors to breathe forgiveness, love, and peace into hearts that are unable to open up because of fear and hurt. God's mercy and peace can reach through when we can't." 🙏

“You can kiss your family and friends good-bye and put miles between you, but at the same time you carry them with you in your heart, your mind, your stomach, because you do not just live in a world but a world lives in you.”

*Frederick Buechner*

After returning from his first day of kindergarten, a six-year old boy suddenly asked his parents during dinner, “Where did I come from?” His parents nervously told him they would discuss it later, and the meal continued with an uncharacteristic tension as the two adults contemplated how to begin “the talk” in an age appropriate manner. At long last, dessert was done, the table was cleared and the family seated in the living room. The boy had endured enough waiting by this time, and very impatiently demanded, “OK, then, where did I come from? My teacher said she’s from Des Moines.”

I’m from Willard, located in a small Slovenian farming community in central Wisconsin. Like so many others, I don’t live there anymore. In its day, Willard’s population was less than the attendance at our last provincial assembly. Unless you counted folks on Sunday morning as people filled the church for Mass, and later the stores and taverns for food and fellowship—or during the week when the three room school was filled with children. Most didn’t live in “town”; they worked the dairy farms which cover the countryside to this day.

I returned recently to join in the centennial celebration—appropriately named “Slovenian Heritage

Days.” and to help the community dedicate their new “Settlers’ Park,” in honor of the families and individuals who first put down roots in the area and then passed on the heritage to their descendants.

The weekend was filled with large crowds, ample food, polka bands, dancing, beautiful weather, reunions, remembering, and liturgies celebrated in the parish church. There were two Masses on Saturday, both of them so-called “Polka Masses,” with the music led by a wonderful group from Duluth called the Singing Slovenes. The Sunday morning Mass was the Tridentine Latin Mass, an attempt to experience what our ancestors would have found familiar 100 years ago.

Despite my misgivings ahead of time, I found the Polka Mass to be a joyous, prayerful celebration. The Mass of Creation and hymnody sung to familiar polka and waltz melodies coexisted, along with the familiar ritual of eucharist, something old and something new. People joined in and by all accounts enjoyed it very much. The Latin Mass on Sunday, while not claiming to be anything more than an experience of the way it used to be, was everything of the old and nothing of the new.

Good liturgy through the centuries has always been a lot of the old along with some of the new—but always

*See Back Pages, continued on page 2...*



*Settlers’ Park, Willard, Wisconsin*

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