



The New Wine Press

Motivated by the spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

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Truck: Teacher, Treasurer, Storyteller and Friend

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

Fr. William J. Dineen, C.P.P.S., 73, a member of the Kansas City Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, died at St. Charles Center in Carthage, OH on January 15, 2013. This is the homily given by Fr. Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S. during the Mass of Christian Burial at St. Charles on January 18th.

On Tuesday morning when I called Father Bill's good friend Father Jim Sloan in California to tell him Truck had died, Father Jim recalled taking him to Santa Rosa a few years ago to the Charles Schultz' Museum. As you know, Father Bill was a big fan of the Peanuts comic strip that Charles Schultz created and he often used Snoopy, Charlie Brown, Lucy and Linus in his sermons and stories. Father Jim said it was like a holy pilgrimage for Truck. He was walking with a cane by then but when he got out of the car at the museum, he left his cane in the car, and walked into the museum with a spring in his heart if not in his step.

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That is why this gospel from Matthew seems appropriate for Truck. Though we could have used the one that describes the good and faithful servant who manages his Master's resources wisely and well—after all, Truck was treasurer of the Kansas City Province for many years and his financial acumen was a tremendous asset to the community—this passage from the Gospel of Matthew captures two aspects of Truck's life that are important lessons for all of us.

First, though Fr. Bill was certainly “learned and clever,” he had a childlike spirit revealed in that ever-present twinkle in his Irish eyes that always seemed to be smiling. I'm sure that is why the Peanuts' comic strip was such a passionate pastime for him—and an endless source of sermons. The Philosophy of Charles Schultz was the philosophy of Bill Dineen. Like Charlie Brown, he never gave up on people. Even when Lucy would pull away the football just as he was about to kick it or lost a fly ball in right field because she was preoccupied with herself, he never gave up on her. Like Snoopy sitting on top of his doghouse with his typewriter, writing the novel that he was never quite able to finish because he could not get past the opening line, “It was a dark and stormy night,” Truck kept on trying. Like Linus on Halloween night, waiting in the pumpkin patch for the arrival of the Great Pumpkin, and even if the Great Pumpkin never arrived, Linus never gave up. And neither did Truck.

Early Tuesday morning, his waiting was finally over. Which is why the second part of the Gospel are words Truck longed to hear, especially these last few years when his body was burdened with Parkinson's. “Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light.”

Though Truck's illness was a burden, his spirit soared beyond the limitations placed upon him. I never heard him complain about his physical problems. Indeed, he often was thinking of others. A few years ago when he was still living in Liberty, I took him to the doctor. Truck had a long white beard at the time, rosy cheeks, and his stomach carried a roundness that reflected his fondness for hamburgers. As we were sitting in the waiting room, there was a little boy that kept staring at him. It was a few days before Christmas and Truck leaned over to me and said, “I need to shave off this beard. That little boy thinks I'm Santa Claus and if Santa is at the doctor's office because he's sick, Christmas might have to be canceled!”

Teacher and Storyteller

Someone once observed, “A mediocre teacher tells, a good teacher explains, a superior teacher demonstrates, and the great teacher inspires.” From grade school to graduate school, I have been privileged to know many great teachers, but Father Bill did the impossible when I was in high school: he actually inspired me to learn some physics. For an English major like me that was some feat. We were always amazed and mesmerized at how he could be writing some Physics formula on the chalk board, and without missing a beat switch the chalk from his left hand to his right and keep on writing.

Truck taught algebra and physics at Precious Blood Seminary. At the beginning of my freshman and sophomore years, Fr. Bill was also the director of seminarians. He was only ordained a few years at that point, but his hair was already beginning to go gray. I can still see his silhouette standing in the long hallway at Precious Blood Seminary. He stood right in front of chapel with a small black book in one hand and a pen in the other. As we raced through the double doors trying not to be late for Morning Prayer or Mass, Bill was poised to jot our name in the book if we were a minute late.

He had a stern demeanor in those days, so when he called us into his office at the seminary, we were terrified. Bill was a heavy smoker at the time so when you walked

into his room, it was like entering a cloud to meet the wrath of God. Instead, we received guidance and good will. Bill pretended to be gruff but he had a large heart filled with generosity and compassion.

Because of his great love for the Peanuts comic strip, the students gave Truck a giant stuffed Snoopy when he left the seminary to train to be a hospital chaplain. Brother Steve Ohnmacht told me he placed it in the front seat of his car, secured the seatbelt, and Snoopy rode shotgun to Truck's destination.

A Friend Forever

Even when his body began to betray him, he always enjoyed going out to lunch or dinner with friends. In Liberty, Truck had many favorite haunts, but the one I remember most was a little café just off the square called Ginger Sue's. Truck was having difficulty walking by then, either using a walker or a cane, but when he walked into Ginger Sue's, everyone turned and looked and greeted him. It was like that old TV series, *Cheers*, wherever knows your name. Certainly everyone at Ginger Sue's knew his name and every waitress knew what he would order: the thickest hamburger on the menu.

Fr. Bill knew the words of St. Paul by heart: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Though Parkinson's and heart disease slowed him down, he knew that nothing could separate him or us "from the love of God." Truck was a prime example of Paul's profession of faith: "For I am certain that neither death nor life...can separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus." As a Missionary of the Precious Blood, he not only sought to preach reconciliation; he sought to live the reconciliation that comes to us through the blood of Christ.

We take to heart, then, our belief that Truck's spirit will live on in each of us who knew him and loved him. Anna and Claude, the Precious Blood community is grateful that you shared your brother with us all these years. His memory will live on in our province and our community for longer than we can measure. To Connie and all the nurses and staff here at St. Charles, on behalf the province I want to thank you for taking such good care of all of our members, and especially our beloved Father Bill. From those of you who served him in the dining room to the nurses in the infirmary, I could see he was so grateful for your love and affection.

Yes, as the book of Wisdom reminds us today, "The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them." After years of limitations imposed by illness, Truck is free at last. He is at peace. "Chastised a little, he shall be greatly blessed because God tried him and found him worthy of himself. As gold in the furnace, God proved him...and in the time of his visitation, he shall shine."

The New Wine Press

Missionaries of the Precious Blood

Kansas City Province

www.kcprovince.org

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.

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The Embodiment of Divine Compassion

Kathy Keary, Kearney, MO Companion

I have been blessed with the amazing opportunity to participate in two African mission awareness trips hosted by Christian Foundation for Children and Aging (CFCA). Witnessing Catholic Social Teaching in action has been edifying. This rich tradition—often referred to as the Church’s “best kept secret”—expresses the epitome of God’s love, compassion, and justice for all his children without exception.

As a student of Social Justice, the term “solidarity” was academically implanted in my mind—but remained outside my realm of experience until my first mission awareness trip. The Kenyan people enthusiastically greeted us with lively song and spirited dance, holding absolutely nothing back. They showered us with handmade gifts, sacrificing the little they had to lift us up. Amid this gracious reception, the word, “solidarity” flashed in my mind: “Aha, I get it! I now know what they are talking about. This is it.” Experiencing this outpouring of affection clarified the power that compelled me to travel half way around the world. It was undoubtedly a divine call to share in God’s love with people two worlds away—a love

that embraces the other’s joy and pain, does not tolerate oppression, and calls for action. In that moment, “solidarity” moved from being just a fancy word to being a gripping force evoking thirst for communion with God’s people. Sharing precious moments with those so different from myself allowed me to experience a deep sense that we are all one human family united by the love of our heavenly Father. This epiphany was a mere introduction to the many experiences of solidarity our trip had in store for us.

In my 2007 trip, my daughter Kristina and I met my sponsored son Leonard, who lives in Uganda. We had been writing one another since he was orphaned at age six. Both Kristina and Leonard were 21 years old—young adults. A mystifying force quickly bonded us together as we spent the next few days cherishing one another’s company. Undoubtedly, Kristina and I from the golden land of opportunity are far removed from Leonard’s existence of struggle in a developing country, but in that short period of time, we became kindred spirits. We became family. Even though geography separates us, we carry

one another in a very special place in our hearts—the driving force to our reunion in 2011.

Solidarity is key in Catholic Social Teaching. CFCA mission awareness trips have allowed me to embrace solidarity as a precious treasure. The Eucharist draws us into union with God and humankind. As we consume the body and blood of Jesus, we commit ourselves to be bread for the world, striving to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and living in communion with all of creation. The Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* invites us to enlarge the scope of our Christian concern, opening our hearts to the expanding world. The document begins, “The joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.” In the words of Pope John Paul II:

Solidarity helps us to see the “other”—whether a person, people, or nation—not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our neighbor, a “helper,” to be a sharer, on par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God.

There was something very different in the air on my second visit to Kenya in 2011. CFCA Kenya had called a meeting with the goal of creating a plan to empower families to lift themselves out of impoverished lifestyles. It was the women who showed up expressing their willingness to walk with CFCA as they endeavor to become self-sufficient. Most of the fathers lacked an interest in participating. Recognizing that the immediate hope for survival of the Kenyan family rested in the mother, the typical head of the household, CFCA formed Mother’s Groups. There are also a handful of men who are active in the Mothers’ Groups, who share the dream of breaking the chain of poverty for their families. CFCA is taking other steps to reach out to the fathers who for the most part are not stepping up to the plate to battle poverty in a community where despair has been so prevalent. The long-term goal is to change the mindset of the men to one of hope, so they too can be a positive force in the family.

The joy of the women was palpable as we gathered to learn about life in Kenya for families who have intimately known hunger and despair. Their newfound confidence shone like a bright star contrasting the black sky of days gone by, in a culture where women have traditionally not been valued. With pride, the children observed their

mothers displaying professionalism and charm as they addressed CFCA, the organization that had offered them the gift of empowerment.

Each mother is encouraged to contribute a small amount of money to a pool monthly. CFCA matches their funds. The ladies can then take out a loan to start or expand a business. The possibilities are endless. Some utilize their talents by making soaps, candles, jewelry, or baked goods. Others raise crops or livestock on a limited scale. One woman was able to open a modest restaurant, while another buys old clothes and sells them for a profit. They learn from one another as they share their successes and hurdles within their supportive community. Their ventures have allowed them to clothe their once barefooted children, send them to school, and put basic nourishment on their humble tables.

The mothers are transforming Kenya with the support of CFCA. Tears and anguish are turning into smiles and hope for a brighter future for themselves and their children. CFCA is working to liberate victims of poverty from their existence of oppression. Hope now has profound meaning. For these mothers, providing for their families is no longer a lofty unattainable hoax. It is now their reality, motivating them to forge ahead despite challenges and obstacles, confident that God has a special plan for each person.

The women advised that owning their own business no longer subjects them to the mistreatment they previously encountered at the hands of employers. Because their dignity is uplifted, they are motivated to put more of themselves into their undertakings. Dignity of the human person as created in the divine image stands at the heart of the social teaching of the Church. The Second Vatican Council could not have been clearer on this subject as is evidenced by the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,

...all offenses against human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, degrading working conditions...all of these and the like are criminal: they poison civilization...and militate against the honor of the creator.

The women explained that they are also able to make more money self-employed, improving their ability to provide for their families and contribute to society. One woman elaborated that she originally saw CFCA as an organization that was willing to carry her burden. She now sees it as the source of her empowerment that has allowed her to break the chains of poverty. In

their pastoral, *Economic Justice for All*, the U.S. bishops emphasize that economic justice is a moral obligation of society, assuring that rights of all people are upheld, including the right to the necessities of life, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, and to decent working conditions.

CFCA Kenya employs the concept of subsidiarity as they empower families. The social teachings of the church dictate that parents are obligated to provide basic necessities for their children; however, they may not be able to lift their families out of poverty on their own. The family may need assistance from another layer of society such as a community organization, a faith community, the business sector, or government intervention. The principle of subsidiarity involves providing assistance at the closest level possible, which in this instance would be CFCA Kenya. That does not mean that larger institutions or government should not play a role in instances where the need is not met and human dignity is being violated. CFCA is actually walking with the people and listening to the families, not making decisions for them—a concept encouraged by Catholic Social Teaching.

CFCA is the brilliant light shining in what used to be a sea of hopelessness, as they reach out to youth. Members of the CFCA staff are wonderful role models for young people. Many of them are giving back after being lifted up as a child sponsored by CFCA. The youth group provides mentorship, helping teens make good choices and setting a good example for their peers. The encouragement received in youth groups goes a long way in helping these young men and women attain a high degree of



self-respect, allowing them to be a source of inspiration to other young people. Teens are now reaching out to lift up their communities. CFCA is hopeful that their efforts at this level will also cultivate a sense of responsibility, giving young men the tools needed to be responsible fathers in the future.

On my mission awareness trips, I have had the privilege to hear many heroic stories of young people growing up in horrendous circumstances who have overcome extreme obstacles to become responsible members of society. One young man, Samuel, spent part of his childhood as a street kid begging for food with his siblings. He was discovered by CFCA. Sponsorship totally changed his life, giving him opportunities and an education that would not otherwise have been available. He is now an accomplished motivational speaker hosting conferences for young people, a composer, a musician, and a councilor with the Kenyan government. He eloquently stated, “You raised me up. There is so much potential in me. CFCA showed me that there is value in me. They have allowed me to be a miracle to others as CFCA was a miracle to me. A CFCA sponsor is making an investment into a life of someone who is desperate. This goes a long way to transform Kenya.”

Catholic Social Teaching speaks of the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. Pope John Paul II described our commitment to the poor as a “call to have a special openness with the small and the weak, those who suffer and weep, those that are humiliated and left on the margin of society, so as to help them with their dignity as human persons and children of God.” Jesus’ love of the poor permeates Scripture. “Whatever you do for the least of your brother or sister, you do for me” (Mt 25:40). “When you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the



crippled, the lame, the blind...you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Lk 14:13-14). “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor” (Lk4:18).

The weight of our responsibility as presented in our social doctrine is expressed beautifully by the late Fr. Henri Nouwen, “The Church as the people of God can truly embody the living Christ among us only when the poor remain its most treasured part. Care for the poor, therefore, is much more than Christian charity. It is the essence of being the body of Christ.”

CFCA stands as a wonderful testament to Catholic Social Teaching. Everyday they go way beyond putting a band-aid on the nightmare called poverty. Guided by their faith, CFCA is a movement that empowers the poor to lift themselves up, creating responsible families in wholesome communities, where the sanctity of the human person is guarded and every member is able to contribute to the common good. By sponsoring a child, you can become a part of this miracle of transformation.

Editor’s Note: The CFCA website is www.cfcausa.org or www.hopeforafamily.org.

Their mission as described there is as follows:

We provide personal attention and direct benefits to children, youth, aging and their families so they may live with dignity, achieve their desired potential and participate fully in society.

We invite people of good will to live in daily solidarity with the world’s poor through one-to-one sponsorship.

We build community by fostering relationships of mutual respect, understanding and support that are culturally diverse, empowering and without religious or other prejudice.

Grounded in the Gospel call to serve the poor, CFCA is a lay Catholic organization working with persons of all faith traditions to create a worldwide community of compassion and service.



Lent with St Luke: Precious Blood Reflections

Fr. Alan Hartway, C.P.P.S.

This is my attempt to imagine the readings from Luke this Lent as relevant to the spirituality of the Blood of Christ. These reflections are by no means meant to be exhaustive or complete. Like Lent itself, I imagine them as a journey to the Table at Emmaus and the Light come into the world.

While many parishes change to readings for the Year A for the RCIAA, and therefore the Gospel of St. Matthew, it is still an option to use the readings from the Gospel of Luke and continue with Year C readings. One advantage is continuity and connection with the rest of the liturgical year. The Gospel of Luke is itself as rich and deep as St. Matthew's. The first two weeks are very similar: Jesus' Temptation in the Desert and The Transfiguration. However, in Year C the Woman at the Well from John on the Third Sunday of Lent becomes two parables about repentance, The Man Born Blind becomes the Prodigal Son, and The Raising of Lazarus becomes the Woman Caught in Adultery. The last two alone argue effectively for their use this Lent because of their obvious reconciliation theology and practice.

First Sunday of Lent: Contemplative Adoration

In the seminary we had Benediction every evening. Historically this was a papal privilege granted to the Society of the Precious Blood that older generations had been proud of. As a youth, I did not get it. In fact, in the aftermath of many liturgical changes after Vatican II, the value of Benediction was called into question, largely because we were beginning to move to a theology that encouraged people to receive the Eucharist and drink from the chalice. Benediction was adoration and a way of receiving the divine presence of Jesus for those not able to receive communion. So, it was promoted prior to the Council.

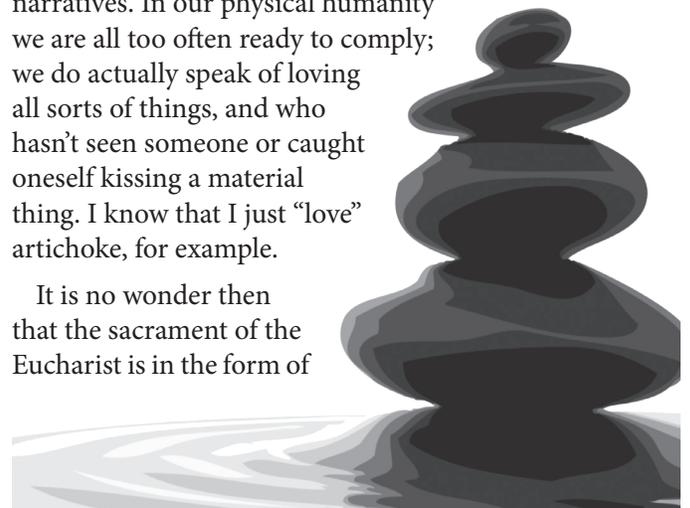
For most of my life I remained unconvinced of the value of Benediction. In recent years, 24/7 adoration chapels been made available in some parish churches; it is expensive to make the necessary architectural and safety accommodations. I have watched how these have become popular and actually have people in prayer 24/7. There is a reason for this. We need to bow and worship.

During the last fourteen years, I have taught at a Buddhist university in Boulder, CO, called Naropa University. Buddhists have a long history and development of very sophisticated contemplative practices that are at the cultic center of Buddhism. Fundamentally there are two kinds of contemplative practices. *Sammatha* contemplation uses some object to focus the senses and the breathing so that a person can be undistracted by the world around them, not in order to leave the world, but rather to engage the world more attentively and compassionately. Something like an image, a candle, incense, bells (in Tibetan Buddhism it is singing bowls), or the like are used. They are not worshipping these things in the sense of giving them latria, adoration. It is actually very similar to many Catholic practices of contemplation, Benediction being one of them.

Adoration is a greeting by a servant; in the classical world this was an elaborate "from the mouth" expression of a kiss, often of the feet, literally "ad + oro", as in English "oral." It's where we begin in prayer. We could not imagine kissing Jesus, although we do have a Good Friday ritual of kissing the cross. It should not surprise us that the Song of Songs begins in the first verse with this practice, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." St. Theresa of Avila comments on this extensively in her text, *The Consolations of Love*.

The Evil One, too, wants to be kissed, adored, and fawned over. He makes an enormous attempt at this step toward adoration of himself with Jesus in the desert. This adoration coup forms the basis of the desert temptation narratives. In our physical humanity we are all too often ready to comply; we do actually speak of loving all sorts of things, and who hasn't seen someone or caught oneself kissing a material thing. I know that I just "love" artichoke, for example.

It is no wonder then that the sacrament of the Eucharist is in the form of



something we take by the mouth. It is a very intimate and most profound way of adoration. We do this with simple bread and wine, become body and blood. We kiss Jesus. He kisses us back with grace and love to be more attentively and compassionately present in our world.

The Evil One departs according to Luke, but only for a time. He really wants us to kiss him. This is the great temptation. Notice how the Evil One uses objects to tempt us, to put them to our mouths, so to speak. In the second reading St. Paul says, “The word is in your mouth!”

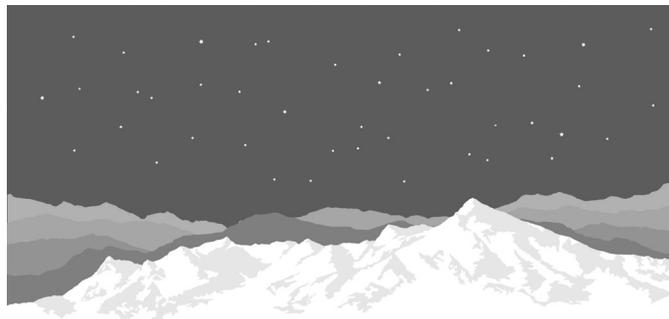
Lent is our own symbolic desert experience, precisely so that we can come round to adoration of God. I’m only just now beginning to understand Benediction as contemplative adoration and the purifying and illuminating experience it can be on the spiritual journey. During this Year of Faith, we will be tempted by the “bread” of this world. Are we prepared to kiss Jesus in the Eucharist and meet Him in faith? Are we prepared to drink deeply of the chalice of his Precious Blood? Will we be tempted to adore earthly things and material treasures?

The second form of contemplation is *vipassana*, which is the practice of not needing anything at all to achieve that state of unitive love which St. Theresa of Avila speaks of. The question here is: can I so empty my mind of self, that there’s only Jesus present? This too is Benediction.

Second Sunday of Lent: Counting Our Stars

Climbing up mountains, stepping outside to view the stars, imagining that perfect body, are all experiences that invite us up out of ourselves. While I’m tempted to use the Star Walk app on my iPad, it takes a little effort to go outside, in the dark and cold of night, to see the stars first hand. The occultation of Jupiter by the Moon several weeks ago was spectacular, for instance. Twenty years ago, I actually climbed up to Sky Pond at the continental divide of Rocky Mountain National Park: check one off my bucket list.

J.R.R. Tolkien, who wrote *The Hobbit* and was a devout Roman Catholic, also wrote an essay “On Faerie Tales.” One of his major points is that we as human being need two things: to survey the cosmos and to be one with it. These are two longings of the human person, built deeply within us by God who made us. When we don’t have these two things, a deep part of us is missing, empty, or comes up short. It is rather like the author of Proverbs



who writes, “Without a vision, the people fail.”

This seems a fundamental aspect of the transfiguration. Peter, James, and John were overcome with sleep. This is what the dullness of daily routine does to our lives. We are in a sort of sleep. Luke is very careful to state “but becoming full awake, they saw his glory.” Luke is deliberately using the language of prayer.

Vision is necessary for us to be fully human. Our community and provincial mission statement give us a vision. St. Gaspar del Bufalo gave his community and mission houses a vision. This engaged their lives so significantly and powerfully that they became effective ministers of the Word in their time. In a time of shifting historical kingdoms and allegiances, they stayed on task.

In the December 20, 2012 issue of *The Financial Times*, Pope Benedict XVI had a fine article about vision in light of our most recent election and the anger and division it wrought in our country. “It is in the Gospel that Christians find inspiration for their daily lives and their involvement in worldly affairs—be it in the Houses of Parliament or in the stock exchange. Christians should not shun the world; they should engage with it. But their involvement in politics and economics should transcend every form of ideology.” And later in the same article, “When Christians refuse to bow down before the false gods proposed today, it is not because of an antiquated worldview. Rather, it is because they are free from the constraints of ideology and inspired by such a noble vision of human destiny that they cannot collude with anything that undermines it.” St Paul said, “Our citizenship is in heaven.”

We need during this time of Lent to be renewed in our vision, both in its tradition from St Gaspar and St Maria, but also in its modern manifestations, where the light of Jesus is shining forth. Examples are readily found in the Chicago reconciliation ministry, our provincial volunteers program, our stance on the death penalty, our resistance to cultural conformity, our missionaries

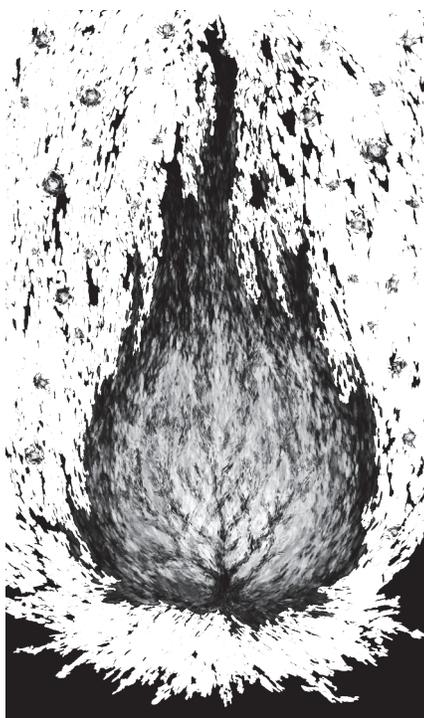
throughout the world.

Luke's story of the Transfiguration forces us to ask if we are asleep or fully awake. What excites me or energizes me about the C.P.P.S. vision? What part of my apostolate makes that work come alive in the world? Am I just preserving some medieval vision of Church, or am I willing to promote and live the vision of Vatican II? Who are the stars guiding my life?

Third Sunday of Lent: Fear and Trembling

Luke's two short parables this Sunday focus on discernment. This is also the first scrutiny Sunday, so these readings are apt in light of this ritual. Lent itself is a time of discernment. A time to "read the signs of the times." This reading is always done in the light of the whole Word of God. Discernment is not necessarily some sort of rationale and logical process, although there is always that part. Discernment engages our inmost faculties of the soul, however, and so in some sense continues the theme of vision from last Sunday.

Luke's examples of people killed in a collapsed tower accident and an unfruitful fig tree are both instances of how "off" our human perspectives can be. Lately in the United States, every time something really big and bad happens, some alleged representative of Christianity will proclaim that it is God's punishment for homosexuality



or something like that. God must have an awful aim, because a lot of the "wrong" people are getting hurt. Besides, we all know that when we sit down and think it through, that surely God does not operate this way, or else a lot of people would just spontaneously combust. Or a whole lot more towers would be falling. This reading offers a window for us to

shift our speech about how God acts in the world.

While discernment has an irrational aspect, that does not mean that it is less than logical thinking. Because it is a movement of the soul securely anchored in the mind of God, it is the best way to will ourselves in the reign of God. Perhaps that is why St. Paul writes this week, "Whoever thinks he is standing secure..." The life of prayer is deeper than thinking and certainly deeper than feeling. Rather it involves a sense of awe (our Biblical translations opt for the word "fear" unfortunately) and our trembling in the divine presence.

Just when we don't expect it, God appears and acts in our lives, but hardly according to our human ways. Jesus is very clear about this. The fig tree is given a second chance. Jesus is merciful, kind, patient; indeed the very embodiment of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Bushes on fire, towers falling, fig trees cut down rivet our attention. In fact that is St Paul's point in the second reading, that God is trying to get our attention. God certainly grabs Abraham's attention. We seem to think that we are less fortunate for want of such spectacles. Somewhere I read in Annie Dillard, that if God were ever really to show up in an American congregation as a result of the invocations for such an appearance in our ritual prayers, that we would be blasted out of our pews. I believe she's right.

Here's my own little blast for a congregation. The modern translator is very polite in the gospel so as not to offend the American impious. The gardener responds to the master that I will "fertilize it" is literally in the Greek "to throw manure", and even that's being polite English for simply Greek "s**t." Whoever said Jesus didn't have a rural sense of humor in front of the churchy folk? I suspect he's suggesting that it is through the trials and challenges of life that will be grow and bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

At this point in Lent we should be well into our own discernment, our examination, our communal reading the signs of the times. Do we have the courage to be so honestly blunt and without guile? Is it our reading of the signs of the times or are we reading God's reading? Are we in control or is God? How does grace "dig around" and "fertilize" my life? What fruit have I born this past year?

Editor's Note: Reflections for the fourth and fifth weeks of Lent will be published in the March issue of The New Wine Press.

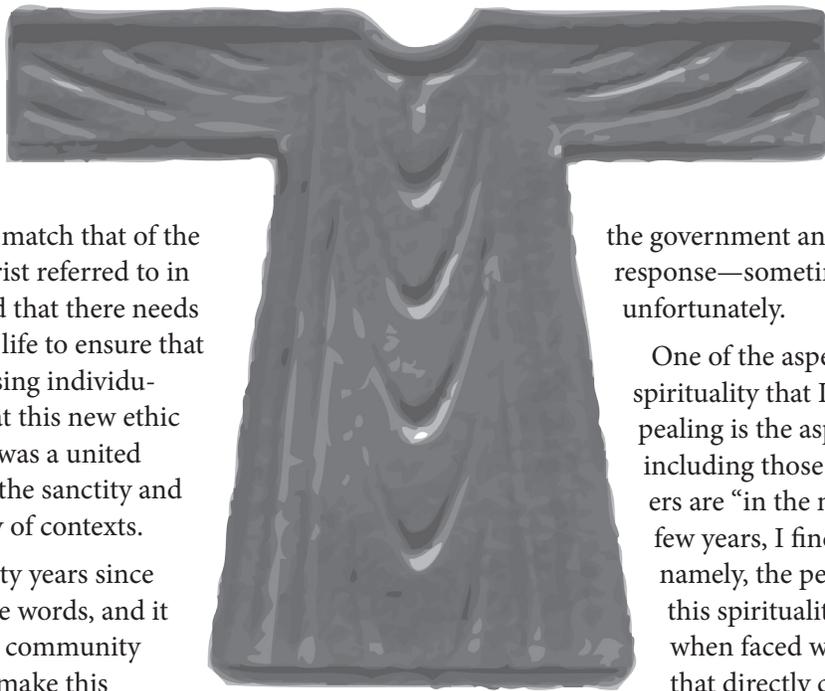
Clothed with Dignity

Vicky Otto, LGBT Ministry Committee Member

As a child growing up in the 60s, I was fortunate enough to grow up in a world where there were people who saw injustice and worked to change it. Who could forget Martin Luther King, John Kennedy, Harvey Milk, Rosa Parks, and Cesar Chavez? As a lifelong Catholic, one of my heroes in the Church was the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago. In a 1983 address, he proposed that the Church consider adopting what he called a “Consistent Ethic of

Life.” He said, “All life has dignity and worth from the moment of conception to natural death.” He went on to suggest that this ethic needed to match that of the seamless garment of Christ referred to in the Gospel. He suggested that there needs to be inclusiveness to all life to ensure that there are no “seams” closing individuals out. His hope was that this new ethic would ensure that there was a united front of commitment to the sanctity and quality of life in a variety of contexts.

It has been almost thirty years since the Cardinal shared these words, and it appears that our Church community continues to struggle to make this ethic a reality. Bernardin proposed that anyone’s life should be seen with a sense of dignity and worth, no matter who they are, what they look like or where they live. This is consistent in what we know of our baptismal covenant. By virtue of our baptism in the Catholic Church, we are considered children of God and brothers and sisters to one another. The ethic of the dignity and worth of life that Bernardin proposed is the same ethic we cherish in our families of origin. We would do anything for the members of our family of origin. Would we do the same for brothers and sisters in faith? In 2009, the government of Uganda proposed a new law that would make same sex relations a criminal offense with the possible penalty of death. What was remarkable about this story was that this horrific suggestion of a law that degrades rather than respects the life of our brothers



and sisters in Uganda was first proposed by conservative Christians in the country. While individuals throughout the world have expressed their outrage regarding this proposed law, the government and the Church have offered what many have described as a “lukewarm” objection to it. Throughout the United States in 2012, story after story was reported about lesbian, gay and bisexual young adults who took their own lives after being victims

of repeated attacks of bullying. It was only when parents, family members and friends of the victims spoke out about bullying that school systems,

the government and the Church offered a response—sometimes again lukewarm, unfortunately.

One of the aspects of the Precious Blood spirituality that I have always found appealing is the aspect of standing with and including those whom society considers are “in the margins.” Over the last few years, I find that I have a new hero, namely, the people of God who live out this spirituality by not remaining silent when faced with any teaching or law that directly contradicts the goodness and dignity of any human life—no

matter if one agrees or disagrees with personal choices. When I reflected upon this spirituality, I found this description that for me visibly describes the spirituality of the Precious Blood community. Saint Therese of Lisieux wrote, “And so it is in the world of souls, Jesus’ garden. He willed to create great souls comparable to lilies and roses, but He has created smaller ones and these must be content to be daisies or violets destined to give joy to God’s glances when He looks down at His feet. Perfection consists in doing His will, in being what He wills us to be.” As a community, may we live out the spirituality of the Precious Blood, of Therese of Lisieux and of Cardinal Bernardin, by celebrating the dignity of all human life, seamlessly. And in so we one day be spoken of as the heroes of our times.

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Leadership

Gracias, Hermana Eileen

Fr. James Betzen, C.P.P.S.



This month, we in Sedalia, Missouri bid farewell to Sr. Eileen Schieber, C.P.P.S. She came to Sedalia in 1998 to minister to the many Mexican and El Salvadorian immigrants who were moving to the area. Sr. Eileen helped immigrants to access

basic needs like housing, schools, and medical care; she taught English classes and helped them with the process of naturalization—providing names of trusted immigration lawyers and helping to secure needed documents. She often facilitated access to services through her ability to interpret and translate English into Spanish, taking immigrants to medical clinics, hospitals and immigration offices, including many trips to hospitals in Kansas City and Columbia and immigration offices and courts in Kansas City. She was especially involved in prenatal care for expectant mothers and vaccinations for children. She also helped children with registration and with their school supplies.

Throughout her 14 years in Sedalia, Sr. Eileen trained and organized the liturgical ministers for Eucharist,

taught the baptism classes and prepared girls for their quinceañera. I especially appreciated her detail for sacramental record keeping. In the fall of 2008, Sr. Eileen became director of the parish school of religion for both parishes in Sedalia. Since most students of PSR are Hispanic, it was especially helpful that she was bilingual. She also held meetings for parents in Spanish and translated much of the communication into Spanish. She also joined the confirmation team to teach our high school juniors.

Last summer, her leadership requested that she return to the convent in O’Fallon, MO. On December 16th, the Catholic community of Sedalia held a farewell for her. On the 6th of January, the Hispanic community held another farewell for her (with their favorite foods). On both occasions, many photos of her were gathered for viewing and to give to her for a keepsake; many took family photos with her. She was also given a medal of Our Lady of Guadalupe with “Gracias 1998-2012” etched on the back.

I appreciated working with Sr. Eileen, especially her being a member of the Precious Blood community and a dedicated Hispanic minister. I learned much from her about ministry to Hispanics and about the local Hispanic community. I enjoyed visiting with her on our trips to Jefferson City for the Hispanic ministers’ meetings. The Hispanic community is greatly indebted to her for the many acts of service that she has done these last 14 years and will miss her dearly.