

THE New Wine PRESS

The background of the cover is an abstract, textured pattern. It features a complex, interlocking design of red and gold colors. The red areas are irregular, organic shapes, while the gold areas are more linear and geometric, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is reminiscent of a microscopic view of a biological structure or a highly detailed, textured surface.

Volume 25 No 6 • February 2017

My Precious Blood Pathway

On Accepting Love

Fr. Ben Diekoff, C.P.P.S.



Let us serve God with holy joy.

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

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Volume 25 No. 6 • February 2017

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Cover photo: Artist rendering of Crosses made by Greg Zanis for the 762 lives lost to gun violence in 2016 in Chicago.

The Society of the Precious Blood is a fraternal community of priests and brothers founded by St. Gaspar in 1815. Bonded through charity by a promise of fidelity, we are prayerfully motivated by the spirituality of the precious blood of Jesus Christ to serve the needs of the Church as discerned through the signs of the times and in the light of the Gospel.

The Kansas City Province—incorporated members, covenanted companions, and candidates—united in prayer, service and mutual support, characterized by the tradition of its American predecessors, are missionaries of these times with diverse gifts and ministries. In a spirit of joy, we strive to serve all people—especially the poor—with care and compassion, hope and hospitality.

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

THE New Wine PRESS

Missionaries of the Precious Blood
Kansas City Province

Precious Blood Center
P.O. Box 339
Liberty, MO 64069-0339
816.781.4344
www.preciousbloodkc.org

Editor
Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.
rbayukcpps@mac.com

Layout & Design
Margaret Haik
communications@preciousbloodkc.org

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Sport as Religion or Religion as Sport?

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

“If a man watches three football games in a row, he should be declared legally dead.”
-Erma Bombeck

These past months have been long and difficult. Lots of emotion on all sides; huge crowds gathering to cheer and chant; people holding signs and wearing caps and shirts; arguments and disagreements; families split down the middle. No, not the election. I’m talking about the just ended football season (baseball applies here as well). So I write herewith something a little lighter this month.

I recently received an unsolicited email from a company that sells church goods and religious articles advertising a “Sports Rosary.” It’s a bracelet with beads, several of which are small footballs, baseballs, basketballs or whichever ball your favorite sport uses. (You might also want to check out the so-called Jesus Sports Statues.) The accompanying advertisement states, “Our new Sports Rosary Bracelets are a great way to get teens, and even younger kids, interested in saying the rosary every day. Now they can combine their love for Jesus with their passion for sports! These rosary bracelets make it easy to teach all children that Jesus is with us continuously; all we need to do is pray. Each bracelet is crafted using strong nylon cord, durable moulded beads and is adjustable to fit kids and teens of all ages.”

My first reaction to this was, why are they marketing this only to young people? The real fans and the really big spenders are adults. I won’t be watching the Super Bowl this year (I only do so when the Green Bay Packers are playing), but millions of others around the world will. Some will be there in person at NRG Stadium in Houston (as I write this I see there are still tickets available, ranging from \$4194 to \$16674 each). Most of the spectators in the stadium will be wearing (rather expensive) team-related clothing. I’m willing to bet that if the aforementioned company would be there selling their Sports Rosary adorned with tiny footballs bearing the insignias of the Falcons or the Patriots, they could laugh all the way to the bank.

A definition of “religion” according to Webster is “an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods.” Brandon Anderson, in an online article on the website *The Cauldron*, asks his readers to consider their favorite sport: “Is the sport organized? Are there rules in place, and penalties for not following the rules? Are there ceremonies when people congregate together to play the sport? Does the team make you believe, hope in something bigger? Do the men and women playing often seem larger than life, like deities on the field?” Yes, yes, yes, and yes.

Anderson goes on to point out the shared vocabulary of religion and sports, e.g., such as faith, devotion, ritual, dedication, sacrifice, commitment, and celebration, to name just a few. He writes: “Sports encourage passionate, devoted fans. We go to the game decked out in face paint and jerseys and costume, and

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Where Is Your Treasure?

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

In your heart or in your wallet?

The headline for the Catholic News Service (CNS) article caught my eye: “Grace, not money, must guide financial choices of religious, pope says.”

The article (November 26, 2016) then goes on to explain that when Pope Francis uses the word “grace” he is referring to the charism of a religious order. “This founding charism cannot be static or rigid. Members of a religious order must continually look at the world and the church and discern how God wants that original charism to be lived in the world today with the human and material resources the order has.”

Pope Francis sent this written message to the participants of a symposium on economics and religious life, held in Rome the last week of November 2016.

In this same article, the pope is quoted as stating, “As the majority of members of many religious orders age and as building maintenance costs increase, orders have to be serious about discerning whether or not a particular work or project is an authentic response both to the order’s charism and to the needs of people today.”

As I read this, I asked myself, “Has the pope been listening in on some of our recent discussions?” This statement especially struck me, “Sometimes discernment will lead an order to keep open a work that will never be financially self-supporting.”

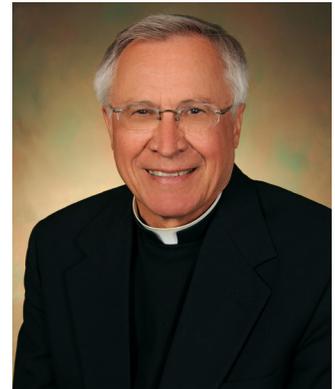
One final quote before I apply some of the pope’s comments to the ongoing discussions we are having about our charism and our future. The CNS article paraphrases the pope’s comment that what one does with money is never morally neutral and then quotes him directly, “Either it contributes to building relationships of justice and solidarity or it generates situations of exclusion and rejection.”

Within the course of both my first and now my second term on the Provincial Council we have had some serious discussions about how to carry out the charism of our Community. St. Gaspar was all about renewal and reconciliation. The General Assembly focused on this as needing to be the efforts of our Community in our time and place.

As a leadership team we have proposed various ways in which this charism/mandate is to be pursued. Putting up a new building at Precious Blood Center has been suggested as a facility whereby these goals can be accommodated. It has become obvious to us that the Center in its present structure does not lend itself well to facilitate groups, especially larger ones, wishing to meet there.

Should we put up a new building? The sentiment of the present members appears to be that this is not a reasonable option to pursue. Members have clearly communicated that message to us on the leadership team. How about

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Poverty in the Life of Enrichment

by Fr. Dien Truong, C.P.P.S., Director of Development for the Vietnam Mission

During my time at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, the facilitator of our theological reflection group once suggested that we re-think one of the three vows or promises made in religious communities when we first put our hands into ministry: that is a life of poverty, she said.

For years in ministry, I have always thought that it is a virtue to preserve what I promised and lived out faithfully. But when I was recently appointed to my new assignment as the director of development of the Vietnam Mission, I realized that the facilitator was right. It's not an easy work to ask for financial support from others. As Henri Nouwen notes, "We may feel awkward and a little embarrassed about it. We begin to worry and wonder: 'Who will give us money? How will we ask them?'"

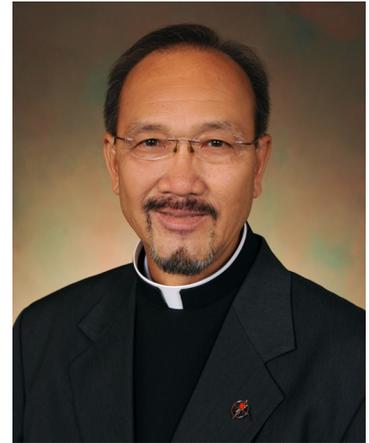
As the director of development, I am reminded of my previous duty of being in charge of doing mission appeals here in the United States, as I now continue to offer information to help raise awareness of our candidates in formation and their apostolic efforts, especially serving the needy such as poor migrants and other marginalized people in Vietnam. I act as a liaison between the Kansas City Province and the Vietnam Mission in terms of visitation, information and resource sharing, all of which require one visit per year to the Vietnam Mission to give a report.

In this ministry of development, talking about needs and asking for support can be a difficult task. But then, speaking about Christ to the lost can be just as difficult. Raising support is one way to help

Members and candidates of the Vietnam Mission, 2016



develop an ability to talk about something difficult with people who may or may not be positive in their response. Thus, raising support is actually a mission in itself. It is, indeed, a special type of mission, and my first chance to help change people's lives. Engaging people in God's Kingdom work and providing opportunities for them to be involved and to have an impact is a special part of our calling as missionaries.



Fr. Dien Truong, C.P.P.S.

This ministry of development is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission. Henri Nouwen wrote: "We have a vision that is amazing and exciting. We are inviting you to invest yourself through the resources that God has given you—your energy, your prayers, and your money—in this work to which God has called us."

I also recall the words of my friend when we were gathered together with a group as he pointed to me and said, "Here is a richest one." I believe that we all know what he meant. Even though we live our lives of poverty or simplicity, we enrich ourselves before God's eyes through striving to fulfill the needs of others. ✠

Fr. Dien places deacon's stole on Tam Hoang, 2016





Fr. Lac Pham (center, second row) with members of his training class at Mercy Center

Sabbatical: A Time of Transition

by Fr. Lac Pham, C.P.P.S., Director of Initial Formation

I am grateful to the community and province leadership for having granted me a year of sabbatical, which began in July 2015. A sabbatical was what I badly needed to repair the body, regain some mental balance, refill some spiritual vacuum, and catch up with some readings—a routine that I had long abandoned. During a visit with the provincial in 2014 I requested a sabbatical—though was willing to stay a couple more years in the Vietnam Mission until the native C.P.P.S. members returned, as they had only one or two more years to complete their studies in the United States. However, I barely had enough physical and mental energy to maintain the status quo of the Mission. The provincial and I mutually agreed that I would take the sabbatical starting in 2015. The goal was to self-introspect so as to assess my thus far lived-experiences, in order that I could be refreshed and energetic enough to transition into a new assignment.

After the 2015 Provincial Assembly, I preached several mission appeals in the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese on behalf of our Vietnam Mission. In the latter half of July, I went to the Mercy Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado for a two-week workshop for vocation/formation providers. (At this time it was not quite clear what my next assignment would be.) Then the three-month sabbatical program followed. After Christmas break I returned to the Mercy Center for a three-month training in spiritual

direction. The gathering of C.P.P.S. Formators in Salzburg, Austria in the last week of July 2016 capped off my year of sabbatical.

In hearing that I was returning to the U.S. for sabbatical, some friends e-mailed to congratulate me—and extended their long standing invitation to come visit them since I “will have a year long furlough, free of responsibilities, free to travel wherever my whims desire, and free to do nothing.” It was not so! Events planned for the sabbatical year were full and structured enough to keep me from free-floating.

Following the 2015 Provincial Assembly I began reintegrating back into U.S. living. It should have been a breeze. Since 1996 I had been returning to the U.S. for all annual provincial assemblies but one. So I was not really completely estranged from the U.S. culture. And I thought I did very well adjusting back and forth all those years, while maintaining sufficient movements back and forth. But up to now, I am still in a slow progress of reintegration. I see, hear, and act in different ways than I remember of myself. I used to prize myself as a “bridge” between cultures. Now I find myself in the middle of an unidentifiable culture(s)—or, no known culture in particular, if you will.

During seminary days I heard stories of missionaries who in returning to their original cultures had difficulties adjusting back. I could not understand that. For a

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Opening Doors to Our Youth

by *Matthew Perez, Formation Candidate*

During September 2016, many guests came to stay at the Formation House in Chicago. One frequent topic of discussion was how should the Missionaries of the Precious Blood reach out to the youth, the Church? During these casual discussions, we talked about what speaks to young people today.

First, I think what speaks to youth is the constant outreach by religious communities and diocesan seminaries across the world, who strive to embrace them with patience and understanding. Youth of today are faced with busy scholastic and extracurricular activities. This can cause distractions in their lives, keeping them from embracing a life of faith. Distractions can be modern technology, perceptions based on books and movies, the influence of nonbelievers, and a society that idolizes sporting events and makes this a priority in their lives.

In my experience in youth ministry, I recognize young people's desire to belong to something meaningful, something that inspires each of them to be a whole person. As a faith community, we must take an active role in the lives of our youth. One of the many ways that we can do this was summed up best by Fr. Keith Branson, C.P.P.S., during the 2016 provincial assembly of the Kansas City Province. Fr. Branson said that as a religious community, we need to be who we say we are. I took this to mean that we need to be a community of brotherhood in the bond of charity. One of the things that attracted me to the Precious Blood Community was a sense of belonging to a brotherhood, a family of believers.

Secondly, we must strive to live out the charisms of our Community by being people whose lives renew the Gospel message. By being good preachers of the Word, we can constantly reach out to the faithful, reconciling their lives with God and others. We do this also by being healers of the broken-hearted, a light for the hopeless, and a means of support for the marginalized.

We need to ask ourselves, how will youth identify us as Missionaries of the Precious Blood? Most importantly, it will be through our actions in social justice issues, the way we live our lives, and through the depth of our spirituality. However, we must also look at how we are identified as a community in the way that we dress or what we wear. In my experience, youth are looking to belong to something that they can identify with, something that represents a

spiritual wholeness. Though the cassock and the mission cross may do that, we must take into consideration that others may have a different view. To accommodate all the Community members, we should consider having

polo shirts, sweaters and dress shirts that can be easily identify us as C.P.P.S. members or candidates. We have done a wonderful job in this area with the Companions; however, when it comes to candidates and professed members, we don't have anything uniform that can easily identify us as Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Through my experience in youth ministry, I have seen how important this is for our young people.

It was also mentioned during these conversations that there may be a separation from community members and current candidates in formation, as well as the youth. There may be a difference of opinion in regards to past and present expectations of formation, but we must not be afraid to embrace the young people of today. Fear can keep us from expressing the beauty of living the missionary life.

Young people of today need to have a voice in the Church. Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, O.P., said it best at an assembly I attended at CTU. He said that the religious communities that are thriving with vocations are those that are allowing the youth to do it their way. That may sound alarming for our men of honor who have served the Church for many years; however, we must not be alarmed, we can challenge ourselves to be a solution to embracing the youth. We can open our minds to change, we can embrace it. Can we open ourselves up and welcome their thoughts, release our fears, and embrace our prayerful, spiritual life that allows the light of Christ to shine through us? We can begin by taking the step to show an active



Candidate Matt Perez

presence in any events that give us the opportunity to interact with the youth, the Church.

In closing, I would like to express the comment that I hear from young people concerning their discernment of religious life. I hear from young people about their curiosity to experience how we live our day to day lives in formation. I hear them saying that they are interested in the experience of a come-and-see weekend. By opening our doors to those who may be interested in discerning a call to religious life, we can give them the experience of living in formation. This gives us the opportunity to build a stronger relationship with young people.

This is a great way to engage, interact, and get to know the young people. Through Mass, prayer, and community life, we can give the experiences of life in formation that will lead up to life as a Missionary of the Precious Blood.

Matthew Perez is currently in initial formation with the Kansas City Province in Chicago. Prior to entering formation, he was the youth minister at St. Dominic Parish in Garden City, Kansas, for five years, the last two of which he was also the parish administrator. ✠

Sabbatical, continued from page 5

well-seasoned missionary, making adjustments to any living environment should have been a well-honed skill, almost as a second nature. Why was it so difficult for those missionaries? Now I find myself in a similar predicament.

From nearly 20 years of forcing myself to think, act and speak in an environment of “keeping a low profile,” “don’t ask, don’t tell,” “what you see or hear is not what is,” and “be extremely discreet of what to share, what not to share,” somehow incubated the attitude of “be on constant guard” and “be suspicious of everyone” in my



Fr. Lac Pham, left, with members of the Mercy Center Spiritual advisor training program

mentality. After times of having been deceived and betrayed by trusted persons, including “good friends” and “relatives,” each time I heard someone say “trust me,” I subconsciously turned to a “protected mode.” “Trust me” switches my internal “red-flag” on.

Conversations with the provincial during the course of the sabbatical year involved possibilities of my next assignment, but returning to the Vietnam Mission was not one of them. When I left the Mission in June of 2015 it was in my mind that I would return after the year of sabbatical and pioneer some other ministries, paving way for the returning native members, perhaps to spearhead the Vietnam C.P.P.S. community into some rural areas where pastoral ministry is underserved and most challenged by past and present circumstances. I had already made some initial contacts in and surveys of a few prospective locations.

But the Spirit pointed me in a different direction. I still maintain the conviction that as a community member my priority is to respond to the needs of the community. And it appears at this time that our more immediate needs are in the U.S. region. The options offered initially were to return to parochial ministry in one of the parishes that the province staffs. After a few subsequent conversations, it became clearer that internal service—namely formation ministry—was where the needs were and the Spirit was pointing me in that direction. In the words of St. Gaspar, “We are living in times when it is necessary to form apostolic workers among people of all ranks.”

The Mercy Center sabbatical program description states, “Our Sabbatical Program provides a unique program design of personal and professional growth opportunities that envelop a whole person approach for growth, healing and renewal. The eclectic blend of spirituality, psychology, theology, education, therapeutic experiences, inner healing, spiritual direction, art expressions, dream work, body/breath work, and healing touch provides a dynamic and innovative opportunity for personal growth and renewal.” That was what I experienced there.

In browsing through the subjects presented in the Vocation/Formation Providers Workshop and Sabbatical Programs, such as *Mandala Explorations*, *Archetypes*, *Labyrinth Walk*, *Genogram*, *Meyers-Briggs*, *Enneagram*, *Dreams Explorations*, *Saint Teresa of Avila and the Seven Dwelling Places*, *Saint John of the Cross and Ascent to Love*, I realized more and more the complexity of the transitioning movements taking place in

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R-L: Tim Deveney, Nora O'Connell, Kara McNamara, Evelyn Moreira, Kathy Keary, and Carolyn Wynk during a young Companions meeting at Precious Blood Center in 2016

My Precious Blood Pathway

by Evelyn Moreira, Companion in Formation

Evelyn Moreira is a parishioner at St. Agnes Church in Los Angeles all her life. She participated in a retreat in Salzburg with Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S. and has also served as a member of the Young Adult Task Force for the Companion Movement. She currently is in formation to become a Companion and is working with other young adults in the parish who are in formation as well.

My road to Precious Blood Spirituality began with one simple question in the summer of 2012 in the International Center for Precious Blood Spirituality in Salzburg, Austria, "What is Precious Blood Spirituality?" It was a gathering with Precious Blood members from seven countries answering the same question to unravel our topic "New Blood: a Conversation with Today's Youth." Before attending the gathering, Danny Oliva (young adult member from St. Agnes) and I were given the task to ask youth from our community various questions. Little did I know that it would be an enhancement of my faith in a significant way.

I never knew about Precious Blood Spirituality except that the Missionaries of the Precious Blood was

the congregation at our parish of St. Agnes and that the founder was St. Gaspar. I was also not aware that it was so big in an international level. Seeing different people with different languages, and cultures coming together to share common interest makes everything so beautiful. One of the many questions and reflections that were given at this workshop was to "Find a symbol of how have I been attracted to PBS?" While walking around the beautiful outdoors of the center, the symbol that described my understanding was a garden. Different plants and flowers with distinctive petals, colors, shapes, and sizes gathered together to show God's beautiful creation. Although, it is not easy for a garden to contain so much beauty. It needs care, soil, sun and water to grow and maintain its place. As we need, prayer, love, passion, and unity to contain Jesus in our hearts and accept all those around us. From a garden, seeds travel with the wind to find a new establishment to show its beauty. We ought to be like these plants and flowers, travel and share our spirituality of God's love to others. So that they may

Precious Blood Companions

too experience God's love and continue to spread to different lands and soils of the world.

Coming back from the gathering, Danny and I continued our Precious Blood Spirituality by reading the book *Saint Gaspar del Bufalo: Saint of the People* by R. Barnardo and *Everyday Christian Spirituality* by Fr. Ernest Ranly, C.P.P.S. with Fr. Steve Dos Santos, C.P.P.S. As we read and discussed each chapter of these books, it opened my heart more in living with Precious Blood spirituality. We had so many ideas and aspirations for our parish.

Danny focused on working with the 1:30 Mass youth choir and exceedingly improved the St. Agnes School Performing Arts Program. I continued to work with the Young Adult Ministry, in which we began a food drive for the homeless and organized concerts to fundraise for non-profit organizations. It improved my confidence, and passion for youth ministry.

Another encounter that boosted my Precious Blood spirituality happened in the summer of 2015 at the Precious Blood Center in Kansas City, Missouri. Another gathering that Danny and I attended together to contribute to our beautiful growing garden of our faith. Here we learned about the Companions, in which again the Missionaries of the Precious Blood left me mind blown! We discussed about ways to engage today's youth to Precious Blood spirituality through the Companions Movement. It's everything that I felt passionate about Precious Blood spirituality as a layperson and learned that there is more to the congregation besides being religious a priest or brother. It gave me a sense of inclusion and enthusiasm to the congregation. I felt that it was a "there's an app for that" moment. Again, I went home confident, passionate, and with new ideas for the youth ministry. Unfortunately, shortly after, with a broken heart, the young adult ministry had to close. While this was happening the teenage ministry was also hanging on a thread as the youth leader had to relocate and there was no one to support them. Holding on to hope and ambition, I volunteered to take on the teenage youth

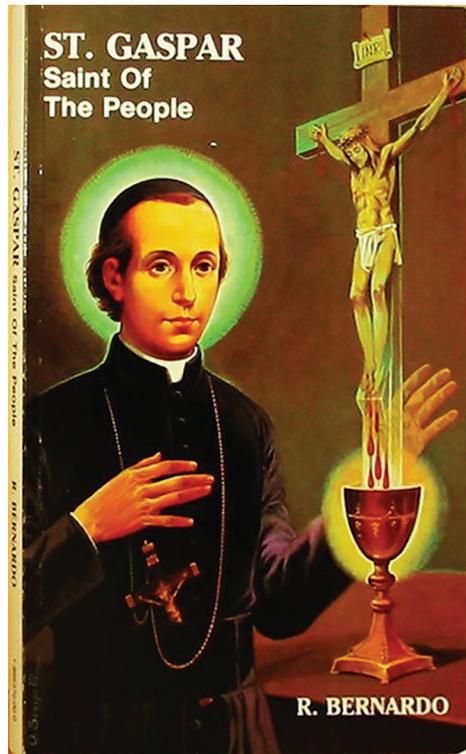
ministry: J.C. Krew. The timing of the transition was completely unplanned but worked out perfectly.

Since February of 2016 to now the numbers have grown from 3 to 10. Words cannot explain how grateful I am to be with them. They have taught me so much in terms of pop-culture, friendship, and faith. They are always given the option of "What do you want to do?", "What do you want to learn?", "What do you want to know?" Our gatherings are held on Wednesday nights, along with weekend events. So far our weekend events have consisted of having snow

cones sales on Sundays, and going to the beach. This year we are preparing to attend the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Religious Education Congress - Youth Day. An event where thousands teenagers from California gather for prayer, worship, workshops, and fun activities. Our gatherings consist of game night, karaoke night, homework night, spirituality topic night, and personal/social topic night. From being together for almost a year through all these gatherings I learned one thing, oh man do they *love* to eat! Secret to a youth ministry is food, activities, opportunity for them to make their own choices and more food. Precious Blood Spirituality has been presented by first watching the bicentennial video in which explains and introduces the congregation, then we have adapting

the companions workbook and transforming it a little bit more to hands on activities. We are almost done with the reflections and looking to do the "Companion Welcome Rite" soon.

In words of Fr. Barry Fischer, "Through the unity of Precious Blood, youth can discover their identity. Jesus spoke to the hearts rather than the heads of those encountered." My heart beats and pumps with Precious Blood Spirituality, which drives me to do more for these "kids." It is a wonderful feeling to see that the seeds from your garden have flourished in a different location. One never knows where exactly, it can be another garden, open dry land, or even the cracks of pavement. No matter what the circumstances, the most impossible can be possible by acceptance to all, and love. ✠



On Accepting Love

by Tim Wanner, Cincinnati Province Companion

Tim Wanner made his first covenant in October 2016 while serving time in prison. This is a reflection that he wrote sharing the experience of making covenant with the community.

My journey to becoming a Precious Blood Companion has been great. It has been difficult and stressful at times, but it has been and continues to be a very positive experience.

I knew about and was introduced to the Society by my Dad, who is an Amicus. He introduced me to Pat Large, who was my sponsor and continues to be a good friend and mentor.

I wrote to Pat a letter of introduction and expressed interest in the Companions Movement. At the time she was the convener of the Carthagenia, Ohio group. After consulting with the group and the group's sponsor, I was invited to begin deliberations.

From the very onset, the community was extremely kind and welcoming to me. A few people from the group immediately began writing me. Also, a couple of C.P.P.S. members took an interest in me. Pat and her husband Jim began visiting me in person almost immediately.

So, going from not having almost any outside friends or moral support to being instantly loved and embraced by strangers really touched me very deeply.

Deliberations and formation was an excellent time for me to grow spiritually. The format was great. There were chapters filled with information either on spirituality or the history and current structure of the Society. The great thing is that the reflection questions weren't "yes" or "no." They were "How do you feel?" and "What do you think?" To answer these questions, I really had to ponder the material—meditate on it. And I think that the process helped the material to take root in me. The group was always very positive in the acceptance of my reflections. They respected my subjective experience and positively encouraged me.

That acceptance and respect is and was a lesson to me, which has helped me to continue to grow spiritually.

As time has gone by I have made a few good Precious Blood friends, both Companions and members. My friends have helped me on my journey as well. They have been extremely supportive. They have accepted me as I am. With my many faults, they don't judge. They love.

I must put the support and love of the community into context.

Two years ago, there was only one person on the planet who cared about me. My entire family had disowned me except my Dad. I had no outside friends and you never know if you can trust your "inside of prison" friends. Then after introduction to the community I had and have many friends. Some

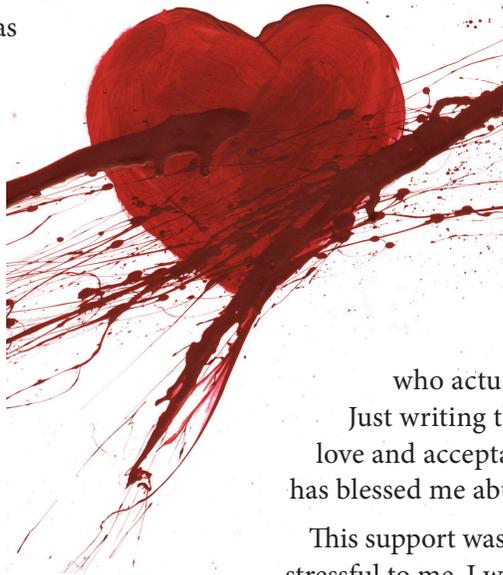
who actually love me. Love me like family.

Just writing this gets my eyes misty. The instant love and acceptance is unequalled. I feel that God has blessed me abundantly.

This support was something that, in a way, was very stressful to me. I was afraid that I would lose it. That I would, that I could, do something to lose this loving acceptance. It hasn't been until recently that I have accepted that these people, you people, have accepted me. As I am. With my faults. And that it is one of the marks of Precious Blood spirituality—to accept and love people unconditionally and not based on performance. There aren't words to describe the grace that has been bestowed upon me through the Companions and members of the C.P.P.S.

As many know, I made my first covenant in October 2016. The Provincial himself, a very kind and caring man, sat across a prison waiting room table from me, accepted my covenant, prayed with me and gave me his blessing. This man, Fr. Larry Hemmelgarn, who has business and appointments all over the world, took time out of his busy schedule to love me in person. Praise and Thanksgiving be evermore to Jesus! What else can be said?

Then on top of all this I began receiving cards, letters, and well wishes from Precious Blood people all



over the country. Every time I think that the love has plateaued, another layer is added. God bless you all!

Many times as I'm alone reflecting on this or that, I think to myself, "Why me? Surely there are better people out there who deserve all of this more than me." But then I remember that it's exactly because I'm marginalized, because of my faults, because I'm imperfect, because I am so visibly stained that I have received this care. That is your, our, charism as Precious Blood people. To love people whom society hates. To go to the prisons, streets, hospitals—and love and accept people as they are. Not as we want them to be, but as they are—in the often-rusty condition we find them in.

I hope that you will all pray for me. Pray that I may perpetuate this same spirituality. Pray that I may fulfill my covenant and make many more covenants. Please pray that I don't disappoint all of you who have been rooting for me.

This is a piece about my journey. It has just begun. But as we all continue to journey together I hope that my journey will cross paths with many of yours on the way and that I will be granted the grace to show you the love that you all have shown me.

God Bless you all—Companions, members, and Precious Blood people all, and thank you. ✠

Editor, continued from page 2

we head to our usual 'pews' in the stands at our chosen cathedral. We cheer wildly for our sports heroes, even praying for success. We wear team colors and carry flags and sing songs of praise. We wait and watch and hope for miraculous moment. We use the royal 'we' when talking about our team because it feels like we are part of something bigger than ourselves, like we, too, are out there playing."

Sports and religion were often not very compatible at other times in history. The Puritans, for example, could summarize their opposition to sports with three points, namely, sport was not the best use of time, sport often took place on Sunday, and sport was often

associated with drinking and gambling and bad company. Well, some things don't change.

The legendary coach, Vince Lombardi, once stated, "Football is like life, it requires perseverance, self-denial, hard work sacrifice, dedication and respect for authority." He also famously said, "Football is not a contact sport, it's a collision sport. Dancing is a contact sport." So is religion (from Latin *religare*, 'to bind') when it is at its best. ✠

Leadership, continued from page 3

renovating a present building? That appears to be a more plausible option. Joe Nassal reflected on this option in his recent article.

Yes, this renovation will require a significant outlay of money to cover the costs. As individual members, where do we stand in terms of our willingness to cover these expenditures? Related to this appears to be these questions on the mind of some members, "Will we be able to recover our costs? Will it be able to pay for itself?"

We need to be reminded of Pope Francis' comment, "Sometimes discernment will lead an order to keep open a work that will not be financially self-supporting."

Being frugal appears to be part of our DNA as a Province and as a Community. At the time the Kansas City Province came into existence the coffers were basically bare. Going back even further, when the Community was started in this country, the coffers were just as bare. Through good management and the frugality of the membership, things turned around. It is safe to say that our Province is at present financially secure.

But just how financially secure must we be? As Pope Francis reminds us, "Members of religious orders are called to be models for the world of a Christian way of dealing with money and economic decisions."

How generous are we willing to be in using our resources to underwrite our charism of renewal and reconciliation within the church and the wider world? ✠



Crosses made by Greg Zanis for the 762 lives lost to gun violence in 2016 in Chicago

An Emotional Memorial

by Sr. Donna Liette, C.P.P.S.

It was December 31st and nearly 1000 persons marched down Michigan Avenue in the cold to remember the 762 lives lost in Chicago in 2016—mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, grandmothers, crying as they searched for their loved ones cross: “My brother, that’s my baby, that’s my mother.”

The 800 crosses were made by Greg Zanis, a man who said, “My heart is broken.” He wanted to do something, and so he began making a cross for each victim of gun violence. What love! He marked each three feet tall wooden cross with a name (mostly young black males!). Beside the victim’s name, he marked the date of their murder and their age at the time of death. He started with cross #1—killed January 1—all the way to #762.

As the march began, Fr. Denny Kinderman picked up Korry Roger’s cross (one of our very own Precious Blood youth killed on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend, #485). As the group walked down Michigan Avenue in silence, the name of each victim was read starting with January 1st. Each name was precious: they were not called gangbangers, as the media often names the victims, rather they were people with

families, with talent, with a God-given future, their flame extinguished suddenly by violence.

It was the hope of the organizers that people out walking the “Magnificent Mile” of the City of Chicago would feel the pain and know that this

Fr. Denny Kinderman holds Korry Rogers’ cross



horror is everybody's problem, not just that of the South side or West side of Chicago.

762 homicides...3550 shooting incidents...4331 harmed shooting victims...



Sr. Donna carrying Korry Rogers' cross

The crosses were very heavy but you could see that the weight of the pain these loved ones carry is even greater. Therefore they were willing to come out on the last day of the year in the cold and ask our city to see their tears and see the effects of poverty, of racism, of easy access to guns and of the failure of systems to offer resources to our youth and their families.

It will long remain in my heart and soul the day we carried a cross that now rests in the home of Korry's mother, Tawanda, to help heal her broken heart. As the blood still cries out and pours out in our cities, as more lives are lost and some of the offenders are locked up, those left on the streets too often seek revenge. Reconciliation is still so much in need.

At PBMR we will continue to work with others to get at the root causes of these statistics. No longer do we want to read or hear that "our city is awash in blood as homicides soar."

On World Day of Peace, January 1, we at PBMR recommitted ourselves to bringing light into this

darkness. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said:

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." We are bringing together our neighbors one street at a time in our Restorative Justice Café to talk, to pray and to plan ways to meet the needs of our youth, how to connect people, and stop the bloodshed in our neighborhood and beyond. †

Sabbatical, continued from page 7

my present life. It is like a blend of new spirits being placed in "used" body—so much for Jesus' advice to put new wine into new wineskins (Mt 9:17).

The sabbatical year afforded me the chance of a new beginning based on that which has begun—but with fresh perspectives and experiences, even when the mind can not think clearly at times and the body is becoming more frequently disobedient. "May your spirit always remain calm, your trust in God most vibrant, and forgiving your neighbor in keeping with the law of charity. Do not forget to work hard, to be active, and to stimulate everything through prayer" (St. Gaspar). †

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Meeting People Where They Lived

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

Fr. Ben Diekhoff, C.P.P.S.

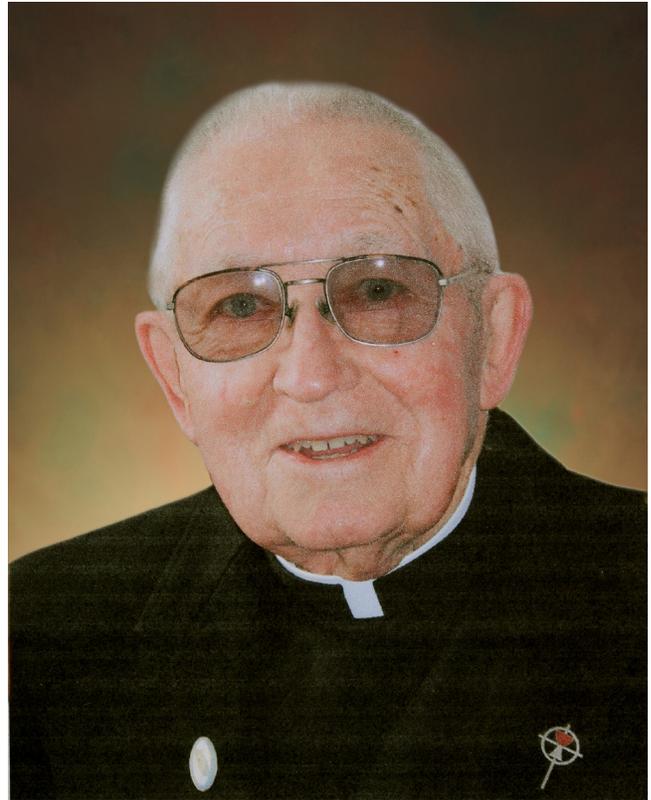
March 11, 1921 – January 7, 2017

On the Friday before Fr. Ben Diekhoff died on January 7, 2017, I was in St. Joseph, Missouri, to visit our three missionaries ministering at St. Francis Xavier parish. This was the last parish Father Ben served before moving to St. Charles Center in 2002. When he moved there as senior priest in 1990, he noticed the other three priests on staff—Frs. Jim, Lac, and Joe—each had three letters in his name. So even though many of us had grown up in the community calling him Bernie—and most of his family knew him as “Fr. Bernard”—he let it be known that for the sake of consistency, he would now be known as “Ben” rather than Bernie or Bernard.

During the twelve years he served at St. Francis, Fr. Ben visited more than 1200 family homes in the parish. This was his mission: to get to know people where they lived. Fr. Bill Walter told me that many families still recalled Fr. Ben’s home visits and spoke of his compassionate presence, even though he left the parish fifteen years ago.

He did this throughout his almost sixty years of active ministry as a priest. From the time he was an assistant in Hamilton, Ohio, through the years he was pastor in Syracuse, Kansas; Linton, North Dakota; and Nebraska City, Nebraska; to his days as senior priest in Park Falls, Wisconsin and St. Joseph, Missouri, Fr. Ben did not wait for people to come to meet him at the rectory, he went to their homes. He sat in their living room. He extended the table of Eucharist to the kitchen table in the domestic church of the family’s home where faith is first taught, learned, and practice. Whether they knew him as Fr. Bernie, or Fr. Ben, or Fr. Bernard, his kindness and gentleness left a deep and lasting impression.

It was not a surprise, then, that Fr. Ben wanted this passage from John’s gospel proclaimed at his funeral: “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.” Fr. Ben may have wondered why Jesus waited so long to fulfill that promise to him and take him home to his Father’s house where he has prepared a room for him. And yet as his health declined dramatically



these last few years, he was ever so patient, a patience born of prayer.

For 95 years, Fr. Ben practiced the quality of patience and perseverance that can only come from the knowledge that St. Paul conveyed in the second reading he chose for his funeral. He knew that “nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” As a Missionary of the Precious Blood, Fr. Ben preached the practiced the truth that Paul proclaims: “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

A Passion for People and Life

Though Ben was well known in the community for his passion for golf, he was more of a bowler when he was ordained on Ascension Thursday in 1947. Those years at the two-lane bowling alley in the basement of St. Charles Seminary in Carthagenahon honed his skills, so when he arrived in his first assignment at St. Joseph’s Parish in Hamilton, Ohio, Ben joined the parish bowling team. “When I came home at night,” he told me in 2007, “the pastor could tell immediately whether I had a good or bad series by the way I crept up the stairs or leaped up the stairs two by two.”

It was Fr. Walter Junk, C.P.P.S. who introduced Ben to golf during his five and a half years in Hamilton. Fr. Junk was pastor at a nearby parish and one day

he picked up Ben and took him to a sporting goods store to buy his first set of clubs. “We play golf around here,” Fr. Junk told him. That was Ben’s introduction to what he described as “the awesome and treacherous game of golf” that hooked him the rest of his life—though for those who had the privilege of playing golf with Ben over the years, you know he rarely hooked his drives. He did not have the distance, but they were straight down the middle.

Like his drives in golf, his life was lived “down the middle.” Although when he left Hamilton and moved to Glandorf in December 1952, Ben admitted, “I did not make a very good impression upon the pastor, Fr. Otto Brackman. I carried my golf clubs in first. He looked at me and said, ‘Where is your chalice?’” Ben also recalled how in those days the assistant was not allowed to own or possess a car. “So when Fr. Otto allowed me to use his car,” Ben said, he would tell him, “Be sure to take good care of this car. I can always get another assistant but I’m not sure I can buy another car.”

In 1963, Ben moved to western Kansas to become pastor in Syracuse. He told me when he arrived, his first thought was: “Where are the trees and the lush blue grass?” But the wide-open spaces of western Kansas captured the landscape of Ben’s soul and the open-minded and compassionate priest he was. The only drawback he said of the five years he spent in western Kansas was the local golf course only had sand greens. Fortunately when he moved to Linton, North Dakota in 1968 to begin a decade of service as pastor of St. Anthony’s Parish, the local nine-hole golf course converted the sand greens to grass greens and Ben said, “I played some of my best golf.”

His greatest shot, however, occurred on October 9, 1996 when he lived in St. Joseph, Missouri. Ben achieved golf nirvana when he recorded a hole in one. “There was something very special about that shot, about its accuracy (some say luck) with which it was executed,” Ben recalls. “Using a seven wood on a par three 135 yard hold I knocked the ball directly into the hole, no bouncing across nor dribbling on

the green. The ball just landed in the hole. That took real skill!”

Welcome Home

Ben’s greatest skill, of course, is not on the links but in the thousands of living rooms where he visited the people he served with gentleness, kindness and care. His reputation for being a good mentor to young priests was well known in the province. During the ten years he was there as pastor, six different associates, some of whom were newly-ordained, benefited from Ben’s gentle guidance and mentoring skills as a pastor. One of Ben’s fondest memories of Linton was the large number of parishioners who came to daily Mass. Ben loved to lead them in singing at the Daily Eucharist. Indeed, for many years, Ben helped to lead the singing at our provincial assemblies each year. And for many years, the jubilee banquet that closed out the Assembly would not be complete without Ben singing his beautiful rendition of “Danny Boy” in honor of the first provincial of the Kansas City Province, Fr. Danny Schaefer.

Ben became chaplain at the Motherhouse of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ in Wichita, Kansas in 1980. During these seven years, Ben said worked with the nuns on peace and justice issues. They also impressed him with their care for one another. “I was deeply impressed by their health care unit,” Ben said, “and in their gracious and trusting art of dying in the Lord, the way they supported each other in the dying process, praying and singing their favorite hymns and being with them until their death. They really taught me the blessed way to prepare for God’s call from his life.” For the past few years, Father Ben has been engaged in this “art of dying in the Lord,” and we are profoundly grateful for the extraordinary care he received from the nurses and staff here at St. Charles.

Whether around the table in a family’s dining room or around the altar in the many sanctuaries where he broke open the Word and passed the Cup, we are grateful to God for Gentle Ben and his ministry of compassionate presence that reflected the best of priesthood in the blood of Christ.

May he rest in peace ☩

How God Sees Us

by Kara McNamara, Precious Blood Volunteer Alumna

In my work for the past two years at an after school program for at-risk teenage boys, I got to see my students at their very best, at their screaming, fighting worst, and at every emotional stop in between. They certainly saw my full range of days too! I saw them go through hard times, saw them achieve great honors, saw them demonstrate resilience and ownership over their lives, and saw them hurl ugly words at other children when they were hurting too badly to control themselves.

I also, every so often, would have a luminous moment with a student in which I thought, “This moment, right now, is exactly how God sees this child all of the time.” I can think of an example in which one of the boys (who had been in foster care from a very young age and generally held himself apart from other people) celebrated his 18th birthday with us. We got him a cake with his name on it and sang to him and cheered his name (some of the students also tried to give birthday punches when I wasn’t looking). He was such a reserved, quiet young man, but in that moment, he couldn’t bite back his smile any longer, he couldn’t hold in the bright light inside him, and he let us see love and joy in his eyes. He quietly thanked everyone and mumbled something that sounded an awful lot like, “Love you guys.”

In looking at the transformation of this young man for those fleeting moments, I can remember thinking, “This is why it’s so easy for God to love us.” He must see us like this all of the time, with all of the potential for such good on full display.

In considering that moment, I was brought to thinking about all of the times that I’ve seen people at their best. Those moments are so inspiring, when

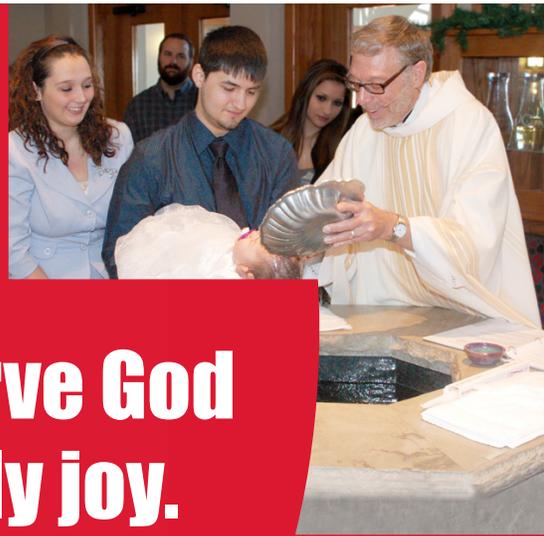
you can see the purpose and joy living in a person. And I also thought about all the times I didn’t allow people to be their best or didn’t try to find their Creator in them. I missed so much beauty and joy in those missed opportunities!



Kara McNamara during her Precious Blood Volunteer term in New Mexico

In times of lack of unity and tension as we are seeing now on a large scale, we as Precious Blood people know that we must seek reconciliation. As an initial step towards this, I am recommitting to seek Christ in those I meet, to encourage those around me to be the best version of themselves, and to recognize my own identity as God’s creation when I’m not at my best. If we could even begin to see each other as God sees us, our world could be a place of such healing and love, not division and hopelessness. If we can find that commonality, we can then begin to do the hard work that must come to address pain and inequality: standing in the margins, holding steadfast as peacemakers in the midst of tension, and starting the work of realizing God’s vision for the human family and environment.

After all, as Mother Teresa shared, “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten we belong to each other.” I hope you’ll join me in working and praying for reconciliation and recognition of God’s presence in those around us. ✝



**Let us serve God
with holy joy.**

- St. Gaspar del Bufalo



Missionaries of the Precious Blood



Cincinnati Province

cpps-preciousblood.org

vocation@cpps-preciousblood.org



Kansas City Province

preciousbloodkc.org

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