

# THE New Wine PRESS

Volume 26 No. 6 • February 2018





# Let us serve God with holy joy.

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

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Cover photo: March for Life, iStockphoto.com

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

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

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

THE New Wine PRESS

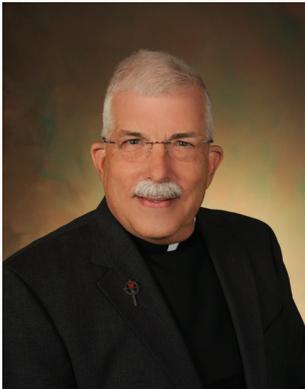
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## Defend, Celebrate, and Protect Life

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

Speaking to those gathered for the recent 45th annual March for Life, President Trump said, "The March for Life is a movement born out of love. You love your families, you love your neighbors, you love our nation and you love every child—born and unborn—because you believe every life is sacred, that every child is a precious gift from God." Good on him for making an appearance and speaking to the marchers and especially for those words. Words that would have held more sway for me if they had been uttered in the first person singular or plural ("I believe, we believe that every life is sacred.")

I cannot know and don't want to judge what is in the hearts of those who "march for life." I do know, however, that for many people the focus is more anti-abortion than it is pro-life. I was heartened to hear the words of one marcher who said to a reporter that many marchers did so "simply to promote the sanctity of life. We are in a moment in our country," he said, "where life is at a crisis—be it life in the womb, be it the life of immigrants, be it the African-American male. We have a life crisis happening in our country."

Pro-life is just that. Pro-life. It means trying to reduce and ideally eliminate abortions and the situations that compel people to have them. It means lots of other things as well. Preventing hunger and poverty; supporting the terminally ill and the mentally ill; religious freedom for everyone, even non-Christians; LGBT people being able to live and work and worship as they desire; fighting racism, bigotry, and homophobia; fewer guns in the hands of people who shouldn't have them; a living wage and health care; an end to killing people who kill people; compassion for immigrants and refugees; working to combat climate change; elimination of nuclear weapons; working for peace; living justly.

It would do us all good to take a hard look at the policies of our local, state, and federal governments, the views of politicians we vote for, and yes, the teachings of whatever faith tradition we are a member of and we subscribe to—and then ask ourselves how they fit with the above list (which is not comprehensive, by the way). And then, wherever and whenever we see and experience something that is anti-life, we march or speak or write letters or vote or all of the above. Everyone gets to believe what they want to believe, and I'm sure some readers will disagree with me, but I maintain we are not pro-life if we are in favor of nuclear weapons or the death penalty, or if we do not welcome the stranger or feed the hungry.

*continued on page 4*

# Be the Change

by Fr. Ron Will C.P.P.S.

On December 21, 2017, during our Winter Solstice Celebration at Precious Blood Renewal Center, Fr. Joe Nassal reflected on the beauty of the approaching light. But light is only beautiful and only has meaning when we experience darkness.

At the time, I had been experiencing some dark clouds hanging over my head because of a severe infection that had invaded my physical body, even requiring surgery. Along with the physical darkness came a spiritual darkness as I tried to figure out why God was allowing this to happen while I was on sabbatical preparing for a new ministry. I thought that I was a good person. Why do good people suffer? What was God trying to teach me? In my darkness, I was so enveloped that I didn't even see the light at the end of the tunnel.

I came to understand that God is omniscient, all-knowing. He knows what is best for me in the long run. If God says, "You need to suffer now," I trust that he knows what he is doing and what is best for me. After World War II, there was a quote found written on the wall of one of the cells in a concentration camp that said: "I believe in the sun, even when it isn't shining. I believe in love, even when there's no one there. And I believe in God, even when he is silent."

One thing I learned during my darkness was that I was seeking the "consolations of God" rather than the "God of consolation." Another thing I learned was that there are many people enveloped in so much darkness that they can't see the light at the end of the tunnel either. Now I can have at least some compassion for people I didn't even pay attention to before.

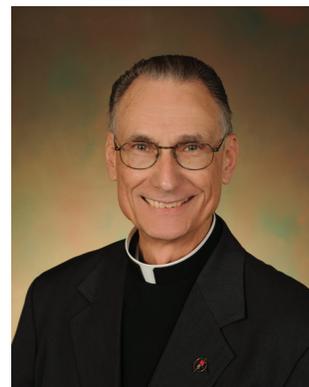
Everyone could tell the story of his or her journey toward God. Some people, like the Magi, have to journey through a desert. Most everyone loses the star along the way, often more than once. Like any journey, there are ups and downs, hills and valleys. Sometimes you get lost.

I have the following banner hanging on the wall of my room:

ROAD OF MINISTRY

As you travel this  
special road of ministry,  
May the Spirit of God surround you.

*continued on page 4*



*Leadership, continued from page 3*

Always remember that the Lord  
has promised to be there,  
whether you are in a valley,  
or on top of a mountain.

His hand will guide you and protect you  
from harm,  
as long as you stay close to His side.

If you should get ahead of Him,  
He will humble you.

If you should falter,  
He will encourage you.

His grace will be sufficient for you  
to carry out the ministry  
He has anointed you to walk in.

His blessings will follow you  
wherever you go.

As you read this article, it is a time for new beginnings: a new calendar year has begun, New Year's goals are written in our journals or somewhere more visible, the New Creation Commission has officially begun its work, the development documents for Precious Blood Renewal Center (PBRC) have finally been approved by the city of Liberty, and the contractor is poised to begin some serious renovation work on Stukenborg Mission House.

For me personally, I have concluded a six-month sabbatical, for which I am profoundly thankful to my Precious Blood Community, and now I have begun ministry as part of the team at PBRC. Our team is in the process of clarifying the Mission and Vision for PBRC, and planning special experiences for 2018 and beyond. I believe that we have much to look forward to in 2018.

I am looking forward to the process led by our New Creation Commission. Just like a caterpillar transforms into a beautiful butterfly, I anticipate a wonderful outcome for our Community. A caterpillar

has to be willing to go through some dramatic changes in order to become something new. We as a Community must also be willing to go through change. We can't sit back and just let the change happen to us. Each of us must be willing and ready to actively engage in the process. New wine needs new wine skins. Some traditionalists who are going back to old traditions may be using old wine skins. I believe that we have something better to offer. God encourages us not to cling to old ways as we step into a new year. Our journey with God involves being transformed by the renewing of our minds. And so, we commit ourselves fully to this adventure.

As God says through the prophet Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." ✦

*Editor, continued from page 2*

I conclude with this quote from John Pavlovitz: "I am pro-*all* life because it is *all* sacred; not only when its heart begins beating, but as it beats and when it struggles to beat and up until it ceases to beat. I defend all life equally. I celebrate it all fully. I protect it all passionately. We aren't going to be defined by the pain we manufacture for one another, by the people we exclude, by the burdens we pile on the already burdened. We're going to be defined by the compassion we show, the help we give, the table we expand, the walls we destroy, the outsiders we welcome, the beauty we exchange, the peace we make, the huddled masses we embrace." Well said. ✦

# Those Who Walk in Darkness...

by Gabino Zavala, Director of Justice & Peace Ministry

“Those who walk in darkness have seen a great light.” These are the words of the prophet Isaiah proclaimed in our liturgy at the mass on Christmas night. It foretells the mysterious gift of the Incarnation, Emmanuel — God with us, who brings light to the world and to our lives.

During this past season of Advent, and as our year drew to an end, we took the time to review the year to see where God’s light needs to shine in our world. Pope Francis told us that Advent is a time to prioritize God in our lives and overcome indifference “through prayer and concern for others.” We need to become aware of “the tears and necessity of our neighbor.”

We now have entered a new year of hope and possibilities. How can we continue to live as people of the light in 2018? How can we be more aware of the needs of our sisters and brothers? We, as a Precious Blood community, live out our Precious Blood spirituality in our daily lives. We are invited to embrace our corporate stances and promote lives lived as disciples responding to the needs of our neighbors through our faith which includes the Gospel and the treasure of our Catholic social teaching. We are disciples of Jesus in the spirit of Saint Gaspar. We are called to be a spiritual community of action.

On the recent feast of the Epiphany, Isaiah again tells us, “Your light has come.” Isaiah calls us to know the presence of God’s light on and around us. He encourages us to spread that light. Epiphany celebrates God’s light being revealed to all the nations. Sharing this light can set the world on fire!

Let me list some issues that we encounter in our world today that challenge us to share the light of Christ by integrating our spirituality as Precious Blood Missionaries in our daily living. These issues not only involve our corporate stances but also other areas that are of concern to us, a People of God. We may struggle with certain aspects of these issues, and so let us look at them in prayer, through reflection and dialogue.

## **DEATH PENALTY**

When Pope Francis came to the United States in

2015 he spoke out against the death penalty in talks he gave to Congress and the United Nations. Pope Francis continues to challenge our thinking on this issue by calling for a revision of official church teaching that would make capital punishment “inadmissible.” In October of 2017 Pope Francis stated that the death penalty is “contrary to the Gospel because it entails the willful suppression of a human life that never ceases to be sacred in the eyes of the Creator.” This challenges us to rethink what it means to be “pro-life.” To be “pro-life” is not just opposing abortion, but also protecting life at every stage from the womb to natural death. This includes the death penalty.

We continue to promote our own corporate stance to work to abolish the death penalty in our nation. And we do it with renewed energy knowing that we are promoting the church’s teachings on the sacredness of all human life.

## **GUN VIOLENCE**

As Precious Blood missionaries we publicly stand against gun violence. We are horrified by the news that there is yet another mass shooting, from Sandy Hook Elementary School to the Pulse Night Club, Las Vegas and The First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. The United States has seen more than 218 people killed in 33 mass shootings, the most mass shootings of any nation on earth, since Sandy Hook. More than 33,000 die from gun violence every year in this country.

People in the United States own by far more guns per person than residents of any other country. Our residents own nearly half of the civilian-owned guns in the world. And our gun homicide rates show this. Gun homicides are 25 times higher than in any other wealthy nation. We must also be aware that gun-related suicides are eight times higher in the United States than in any other wealthy country.

It is far too easy to purchase guns in the United States. We stand on our second amendment right “to bear arms.” Yet it is apparent that common sense federal gun control legislation is needed. But our Congress refuses to act.

*continued on page 6*

Strong gun laws and strict background checks are associated with lower gun deaths. The present federal gun laws allow that 40% of all firearms transferred in the United States are done without background checks. Should Congress not pass laws to close this massive loophole?

We also need to ban the sale of assault rifles and high capacity ammunition magazines. These are not the tools of hunters.

We Precious Blood Missionaries can play an active role in changing attitudes and beliefs in this discussion about the proliferation of guns. There are numerous groups and organizations working against gun violence. We encourage you to find a group and get involved. (Our Justice and Peace Office can provide the names and information of these groups.) And, by all means, let your representative and senators know how you feel about this critical issue.

## **IMMIGRATION**

I have shared with you my thoughts on immigration over the course of last year. While we continue to promote a just and comprehensive reform of our broken immigration system, we should advocate now for those referred to as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). These Dreamers contribute their gifts to our country, the only country they have ever known, and they need to have a law regularizing their immigration status. Take action on Dreamers.

National Migration Week was January 7-18. The theme for National Migration Week 2018, “Many Journeys, One Family,” drew attention to the fact that each of our families has a migration story, some recent and others in the distant past. Regardless of who we are and where we came from, we remain part of the human family and thus are called to live in solidarity with one another. It is not about “us” and “them,” but rather “we.” Pope Francis reiterates in his message, “The situation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees requires that they be guaranteed personal safety and access to basic services. For the sake of the fundamental dignity of every human person, we must strive to find alternative solutions to detention for those who enter a country without authorization.”

We must remember that around the world people have always been on the move to either find work,

food, shelter and/or safety. We should also be aware that migration of peoples has brought many benefits to other nations, number systems, music, crops, inventions, new cultures, languages, and much more.

## **TRAFFICKING**

January was Human Trafficking Prevention Month. Trafficking is described as modern day slavery. It is a multi-billion-dollar criminal industry. Human trafficking traps more than 20 million people around the world in forced economic and sexual enslavement. No matter where you live, chances are it is happening nearby. It can be the young girl forced into prostitution at a nearby truck stop, or the man discovered in a restaurant or sweatshop, stripped of his passport and held against his will. What can we do to educate ourselves and our communities on the reality and evils of human trafficking?

Currently, there is legislation in both the House and Senate focused on combating human trafficking. There are links that give you more information on the evils of human trafficking and what you can do. Informative sites are: Polaris Project, Talitha Kum and the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking (CCOHT). Our office can give you the links to these organizations.

## **CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME**

Pope Francis gave us his groundbreaking encyclical *Laudato Si* in 2015 where he spoke strongly of our responsibility to care for our common home. Nonetheless, 2017 was a year of many attacks on the environment. One of the worst was the announcement of the repeal of the Clean Power Plan (CPP). This plan was initiated in 2015 by the Obama administration with its goal of decreasing carbon pollution in the United States, protecting public health and investing in new sources of clean energy. Now it appears this repeal will keep us dependent on harmful fossil fuels.

The Clean Power Plan leads to healthier lives for our people and continues efforts to combat climate change. The CPP would prevent 4,500 premature deaths each year by 2030; it would also reduce asthma attacks and other respiratory diseases. Repealing the CPP would lead to sickness and early deaths and would have a disastrous effect on our environment.

As Christians, we are called to be good stewards of God’s wonderful creation. One way to be good

stewards is to raise our voices in support of the Clean Power Plan. The EPA is required to collect public feedback before it makes a final decision. Tell the EPA you support the Clean Power Plan.

### **WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE**

Finally, as a Church, we began the new year with a World Day of Peace. We live in a fractured and divided world that longs for peace. Let me share some excerpts of Pope Francis' Peace Message for 2018:

“Let us embrace all those fleeing from war and hunger, or forced by discrimination, persecution, poverty and environmental degradation to leave their homelands.”

“...this new century has registered no real breakthrough: armed conflicts and other forms of organized violence continue to trigger the movement of peoples within national borders and beyond.... Those who, for whatever political reasons, foment fear of migrants instead of building peace are sowing violence, racial discrimination and xenophobia, which are matters of great concern for all those concerned for the safety of every human being.”

“The wisdom of faith fosters a contemplative gaze that recognizes that all of us ‘belong to one family, migrants and the local populations that welcome them, and all have the same right to enjoy the goods of the earth, whose destination is universal, as the social doctrine of the Church teaches’ (BENEDICT XVI).... When we turn that gaze to migrants and refugees, we discover that they do not arrive empty handed. They bring their courage, skills, energy and aspirations, as well as the treasures of their own cultures; and in this way, they enrich the lives of the nations that receive them. We also come to see the creativity, tenacity and spirit of sacrifice of the countless individuals, families and communities around the world who open their doors and hearts to migrants and refugees even where resources are scarce.”

“Let us draw inspiration from the words of Saint John Paul II: ‘If the dream of a peaceful world is shared by all, if the refugees’ and migrants’ contribution is properly evaluated, then humanity can become more and more a universal family and our earth a true common home’. Throughout history, many have believed in this ‘dream’ and their

achievements are a testament to the fact that it is no mere utopia.”

There are many threats to peace in our lives today. In our homes, our communities, our nation and the world. It is a time of massive upheavals on many levels. There is war, a variety of conflicts, racism, polarization and even the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. How can we as a people of faith live in peace, promote peace and become peace-builders?

### **CONCLUSION**

There is a lot for us to think about as we continue to walk in the light and share the light with others. We need to recognize the need for honest and humble theological and pastoral discussions around these issues. Let us dialogue with one another, with honesty and respect, challenging one another in charity if necessary. Let us listen to one another and be open to the words of our sisters and brothers in faith.

As members of the family of the Blood of Christ we have taken a public stance on some of these issues. Others are part of the social teaching of our Church. And yet we may struggle with the understanding and acceptance of our community's and our Church's position on some of these issues. We need to approach these issues, not as Democrats or Republicans, conservatives or liberals, but rather as people of faith, disciples of Jesus, guided by the Gospel, not by politics. We need to inform ourselves on these issues and not merely from one source. We need to know and understand the Church's teachings. We need to read, study, and reflect with a mind open to the spirit as we work towards an ever-growing understanding of God's truth. And above all, we must pray for prayer has the power to transform us and renew us.

As our Provincial Director wrote in his Epiphany letter, “So, let's begin by making room for one another and for each one we meet along the way who will challenge us to stretch our minds, our hearts and our souls.” ✠



*Precious Blood Volunteer Martin Echlter working at Bishop Sullivan Center, Kansas City, Missouri*

## *How I Learned to Drive Through Kansas City Without a Car*

*by Martin Echlter, Precious Blood Volunteer*

Before I left my home in Munich to move to Kansas City, I had a lot of different feelings and expectations regarding the Precious Blood Volunteer program and the United States in general. There were a lot of questions in my mind: “How it will be to work as a volunteer?” “Which people will I meet?” “How will I deal with cultural borders or language limitations?” Besides these “big questions” there was another aspect, more ordinary, which was not really on my agenda in the run up to my journey—the question “How will I get around in Kansas City?” I was not worried about it, because I thought it would be like in Munich where a wide variety of different public transportation options makes it not too complicated to get from point A to point B.

My view changed after a few days in the city, when I realized that most of the people drive their

own car to get around. After realizing this I thought “Well, I don’t think it’s a big deal, because I’ve heard Kansas City has a new street car and a really good bus system.” After using the street car for the first time my view changed a little bit. And after a few (long) times waiting at the bus stop my view changed a little bit more. My first conclusion was “Oh boy, it would be so much easier to have a car to get around.” But during the next months, my point of view would change again.

The more time I spent in Kansas City with different people at work, at home, or somewhere else dealing with lots of different situations, the more I realized that indeed I don’t have a physical car, but I already sit in and drive another, special kind of “car.” At this point you might think “This weird German guy must be crazy, because he can see

invisible cars.” But let me explain this within a poem I wrote. It deals with my time here as a volunteer in the Midwest of the United States, and that it feels like a car ride, an inner car ride. I started at one point to “drive” and since then I’m “on the road.”

## THE RIDE

*Always forward—straight ahead or taking curves, uphill or downhill, slow or fast.*

*Look to the rearview mirror from time to time. Look to the exterior mirror from time to time.*

*Watch the lane, watch the vehicles in front and behind, watch the oncoming traffic, watch the signs, watch planned destinations.*

*Pay attention to passengers, watch out for other vehicles.*

*Don't exceed the speed limit.*

*Don't lose sight of the goals, don't miss exits.*

*The fastest ways are not necessarily the most beautiful. Beautiful ways lead also to destinations.*

*Don't forget to watch the gas gauge. Don't drive too long distances in a row.*

*Take brakes and recharge batteries for the onward journey.*

*Pass cars sometimes, let cars pass you sometimes.*

*Rev the engine sometimes, crash sometimes, repair or get repaired sometimes.*

*Stop sometimes and ask for directions, drive away sometimes and ask for a stop.*

*Focus your view on the horizon sometimes, focus your view on the steering wheel sometimes.*

*Escape to the front sometimes, let your gaze stay on the rearview mirror sometimes.*

*Take curves from time to time, and avoid it from time to time.*

*Sometimes it's necessary to select one lane and sometimes it's necessary to take the other.*

*It is necessary to ignore obvious signs that want to lead sometimes.*

*It is necessary to consider hidden signs sometimes.*

*Let the engine howl sometimes, drive quietly sometimes.*

*Talk to your passengers sometimes, just listen to them sometimes.*

*Follow their advice sometimes, ignore them and follow your instinct sometimes.*

*Once in a while take a deep breath of air.*

*Once in a while dim your lights.*

*Wait sometimes and sometimes let wait.*

*Drive in circles sometimes, take exits sometimes.*

*Pick someone up sometimes, leave someone behind sometimes.*

*Face the sun, face the clouds, face the wind.*

*Sometimes being driven, sometimes drifting.*

*Now and then do not know further, now and then knowing with new knowledge again.*

*Switch gears now and then, brake now and then.*

*Laugh sometimes, cry sometimes, sing sometimes, whisper sometimes, keep silent sometimes.*

*Drive aware, drive by yourself.*

The few metaphors show that there are a lot of things you have to deal with when you're “on the road”—even if you don't own a physical car. Besides all the aspects I've named, I've learned one very important lesson during my journey which I want to emphasize at this point. Of course, it's important to look back and to plan next steps, but keep your main focus on the current street you're driving through and the environment you're passing right now. And also pay attention to the people who are driving with you just in this moment. Be aware about the current time, because the past is gone and the future is unwritten.

*continued on page 12*

# Good Vibes

by Fr. Dave Kelly, C.P.P.S., PBMR Director

As Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation (PBMR) grows, we require more support from funders and grants. Grants and foundations demand that we demonstrate our effectiveness. We do what we do because it is the right thing to do, but I did go to a meeting where I was hoping to get some ideas on how we could build out more solidly our workforce development project – it needs some funding.

The person who met with us was someone who has some knowledge of PBMR and I would say cares for us. He truly wanted to help. He asked me from the start, “May I speak directly without offending you?” I assured him that was the purpose of our visit and would welcome some unvarnished truth.

To the fact that we are mission-driven and live within the community, he responded with, “So what?” He wasn’t being disrespectful, but driving home the point that we need data to demonstrate our effectiveness.

I appreciated his direct talk and was comforted with the fact that we were doing just that. We are committed to better telling our story through real measurements and outcomes.

Later that same day, I got a call from a social worker from Northwestern University. She was working with a young man, Ronald, who had been recently released from prison after his case was overturned on a wrongful conviction appeal. He was falsely accused and put in prison at the age of 15 for ten years. It is part of Northwestern University’s “Innocence Project.” She asked if they could stop by for a quick visit.

Can you imagine what it would be like to be held in prison for ten years at that vulnerable age for something you didn’t do? To make matters worse, when he came home to Detroit, he was shot. Apparently, where his mother lives is pretty rough and he was a stranger in his own community.

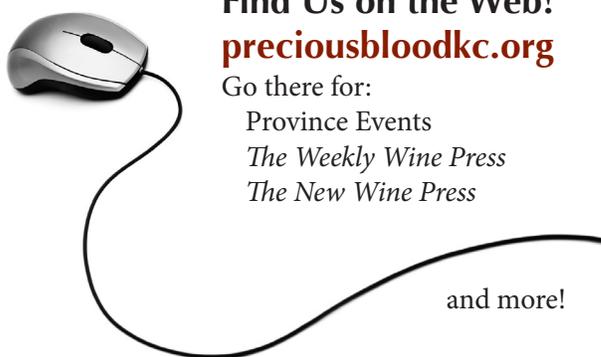
Because of all that was happening in Detroit, he decided to move to Chicago to get a fresh start. He came to Chicago because the only people who really

supported him during his time of incarceration were the social workers at Northwestern University’s “Innocence Project.”

He was staying at a halfway house on the south side of Chicago, which provided him housing, but little else. Due to the status of Northwestern’s funding, they have little capacity to help with support outside the lawyers and social workers.

I met them when they arrived, spent about two hours just talking and then gave them a “tour” of PBMR. As we sat back down, Ronald said, “I really like it here; this place has good vibes.” He went on to share how he felt so comfortable with all the pictures and art that hang throughout—and how everyone made him feel welcome. He could feel that it was a place where people could understand where he was coming from, a place where he was not judged. He said many people, “even after they know I was innocently put in prison, think that I got out due to a technicality. I get tired of trying to explain to people that even though I was in prison for ten years, that I am not a bad person.” He then asked, “Can I come back? You think I can get involved here?” Of course, I said, “YES!”

We are definitely going to work on our “values proposition.” However, the real measurement of value for PBMR is that we “have good vibes” for those who feel alone or disconnected. I am not sure how we measure “good vibes,” but we’re going to give it a shot. In the meantime, I thank Ronald for his seal of approval. ✦



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and more!



## Moving Mountains or Meeting People?

by Fr. Al Ebach, C.P.P.S., Pastor, Church of the Annunciation, Kearney, Missouri

Occasionally I like to go for a long walk because it opens my life to thoughts that I normally do not entertain with the busyness that seems to take all my attention. I usually observe most people walking with earbuds and I wonder what they listen to and why they allow these distractions to interfere with the opportunity to center on their personal lives.

During a recent walk, I thought about a word that I have heard many times at community meetings and in personal conversations with members and Companions: “renewal.” Many people have shared that this term reflects one of the charisms of St. Gaspar—that he brought about renewal in the Church in Rome, and wherever he preached. I understand the term when we use it in reference to Gaspar’s time, but I don’t have as good a connection when we use it to describe who we are as followers of Gaspar. This charism is certainly something we want to emulate, and which seems to be needed in our community and in the Church, but I wonder if we have a good understanding of the term as we try to live it today.

There have been many discussions about our understanding of the word. In fact, this word is being used as part of the name of our new undertaking at Precious Blood Renewal Center. Even with all that has been shared through the written and spoken word over the years I still have a difficult time personalizing this charism, trying to figure out how the community translates the term. People will probably ask me if I have not listened to the news about our political situation today or heard how conflicted the Church can be with challenges we have received from Pope Francis. Our country and our Church need attention, but how do we translate into our time and space the charism of renewal from Gaspar’s day?

Perhaps there needs to be further discussion regarding the charism of renewal. Or maybe this is just something that is eluding me, while others have this spiritual concept figured out for themselves? We are invited to make this charism part of the heart of who we are as Precious Blood people, but people are not

*continued on page 12*

*Moving Mountains, continued from page 11*

quite sure they understand what it means and how to live it. I appreciate people inviting the community into that charism, but I think we need a better focus so we can live this in common.

About a week after my walk, this charism became clearly defined for me. I was called to anoint a dying woman—in a remote area, not even part of my geographical parish boundary. I did not want to go because it was interfering with something in which I wanted to participate—and besides, the weather was cold and the roads were icy. However, the hospice chaplain who called, told me that the priests she had called were not able to come. So, it didn't take much persuasion for me to respond.

I arrived at the home—which was a challenge in itself because of the miserable conditions. As I was administering the sacrament and praying with the family I experienced God's grace in a very powerful way. It was grace to have this woman's daughter and her children gathered around their mother and grandmother to pray with me.

After some time with the family. I drove away from that modest apartment with a true understanding of renewal. It was defined through this dying person and her caregivers, namely, a daughter with five small children. I was invited to understand that renewal is not only about church and state, or even as we members and companions have tried to define it. It took on life in that little home in rural Missouri.

I realized that part my problem was trying to define renewal as something outside of myself. I realized that our community has been trying to translate the term through St. Gaspar's experience. Living this anointing experience helps me capture the essence of the charism. As I relived this experience I wondered if I am listening well enough to other peoples' ministry stories where renewal takes root. I was not understanding the charism because I was trying to grasp it through others' definitions rather than in my lived experiences.

So what was it about this situation that was the spiritual awakening I needed? I needed something or someone to validate who I was and how I served—not for my glory but for the glory of God.

Having put some energy in trying to define this charism, and having had this experience, I am convinced that many of the priests and brothers in the Precious Blood community have served in similar situations. In fact, I have heard many people share about my brother priests and brothers who truly are servants.

What awakened my understanding of renewal was not so much the anointing of a dying woman, but it was the young daughter, who opened her little apartment, where she was raising five young children, sacrificing space and time because mom did not have any place to go. That opened my eyes. She was so thankful to have had the opportunity to care for her dying mother. Most of my ministry is with people who have resources to care for themselves, so getting out of my comfortable environment to experience the Lord's hand in motion was life-changing (renewal). She confessed that she had not been to church in a long time, so the renewal was not about necessarily changing her, but rather, it was about the Church giving her the opportunity to participate in her faith through this sacrament.

After that experience I went to the practical level. I wondered if we were trying to move a mountain through renewal rather than meeting people where they are. Maybe we need to share more stories and look a little more in our backyards, inviting people who live in the fringes of faith and in remote geographical areas. We do not have to take on the entire church or all of society, thinking we need to walk up the side of the mountain holding our gold crosses as St. Gaspar did. Maybe we just need to take some oil and anoint someone on the forehead with the sign of the cross. Renewal may be more about changing who I am rather than trying to change others. ✠

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*The Ride, continued from page 9*

A deep focus on the street you pass right now helps you to enjoy your ride more, it keeps you awake and prevents you from getting into accidents.

This consciousness let me "drive" through Kansas City without having a car. All the love, friendship, beauty, hospitality, open doors, and smiling faces I've already passed on this journey make me grateful and happy! ✠



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

**- St. Gaspar del Bufalo**



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*Is God calling you to a Precious Blood life?*



## Discernment Retreat

March 16-18, 2018

Drexel Formation House, Chicago

For men discerning a vocation as a Precious Blood priest or brother.

Contact Fr. Timothy Armbruster, C.P.P.S.,

[vocations@preciousbloodkc.org](mailto:vocations@preciousbloodkc.org) for more information.