

The NEW WINE PRESS

Motivated by the Spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

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A DIFFERENT KIND OF PARISH

Mark Miller, C.P.P.S.

I recently traveled with 5 of our parishioners from Odessa to Honduras, where we spent the week after Thanksgiving at the parish in Baracoa. This being my first visit to any Central American country, I was unsure of what awaited us. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that it is only a 2½ hour flight from Houston and that they are in the same time zone as Texas. There was thankfully no jet-lag with this visit.

The pastor and several parishioners met us at the airport in San Pedro Sula—with two trucks. They knew we would be bringing some extra suitcases filled with candy, school supplies, soccer balls, clothes, and medical supplies. We continue to discern what is most needed for them to carry out their ministry in the parish.

Let me explain what they mean by “parish.” There is a church building in Baracoa which serves as the main church of the parish. But there are 50 other small communities with their own churches—all members of this parish, *La Exaltación de la Santa Cruz*. The pastor celebrates Mass at three of these communities every Sunday. The other 48 communities celebrate Eucharist once a month on the day which the pastor arranges.

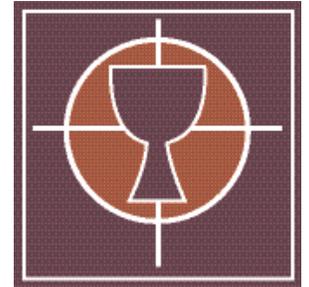
During our week there, we visited one of these communities each day. In some cases, it was not exactly a direct route. One community in particular can be reached only by traveling by car for about 45 minutes, followed by a 15 minute boat ride up the river (not a top of the line cruiser, by the way), disembarkment on the other side, followed by a 20 minute drive before arriving at the community.

The people were waiting for us. We gathered in the church for introductions and they explained the variety of ministries and who

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Fr. Mark Miller (right) with parishioners from the Catholic Community of South Odessa, Texas.



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AMAZING GRACE

Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.

The recent movie, *Amazing Grace*, recounts the story of William Wilberforce, who, as a member of Parliament in the late 18th Century, persevered in the face of intense opposition to end the slave trade in the British Empire. In this quest, he was greatly influenced by the preaching of his pastor, John Newton.

This former captain of a slave ship had undergone a dramatic religious conversion, repenting of the misery he had inflicted on the thousands of human cargo he had transported for many years (the hymn, *Amazing Grace*, was written as an expression of his conversion).

At one point in the movie, Wilberforce finds himself discouraged and seemingly defeated in his struggle after 20 years of trying. His wife says to him, “Is that the end of your story?” He replies, “You think not?”—to which she responds, “No. Because after night comes day. The people aren’t so afraid now that the war with France is being won. When they stop being afraid, they rediscover their compassion. So the people have their compassion back, and you still have your passion. That matters more.”

When they stop being afraid, they rediscover their compassion. Those who want power and control know that fear is a very effective tool to that end—and so they use it (even the Church at its worst, does this). For example, in the United States, the current administration has skillfully and blatantly inserted fear into the political dialogue and into the everyday lives of citizens, and today we find ourselves abroad in wars that won’t end, and at home with diminished civil liberties.

Fear, even perceived fear, is crippling and harmful. It erodes the best part of our nature: the compassion which fuels our passion, and the generosity which does not allow for limits on that compassion.

As you read the various articles in this issue, notice the common thread that runs through the fabric, namely, the invitation to move beyond fear and live with compassion, generosity and hope.

Our province is grappling with its commitments to various ministries; the Church in other places shows us different ways; ministry to the sick and dying calls us away from fear; a young man chooses a life of reconciliation and hope; the forgotten ones ask us to remember; and the issues surrounding immigration test the fear/compassion tension in all of us.

One author references the gospel account of the multiplication of loaves and fishes. It’s an important image: there is always enough of everything—bread, money, people, time, faith, hope, compassion, generosity. There is always enough—and even leftovers—when we choose not to do it alone, when we are willing to let go and place it in the Lord’s hands.

Compassion and justice are not possible unless we reject fear. Neither is Eucharist, where all of what we do and who we are comes together. Perhaps the most important thing that happens at Mass is that Jesus takes *us*, blesses *us*, breaks and pours *us* out, and gives *us* to one another and a waiting world. But he can’t do it unless we are willing to trust enough to place what little we [think we] have into his hands.

It truly is amazing grace when we come to this point. We can see and we are free. *’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.* 🙏

THE NEW WINE PRESS Kansas City Province

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

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

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

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was in charge of each. It was not the pastor. They then asked us about our parish organizational style and how it is that we do church.

In one of these communities, it was obvious to us that the people listened to the news and were aware of what was going on outside of the world of their parish community. They asked questions about our government and our lifestyle here in the United States, questions which indicated significant awareness, despite the lack of formal education.



We then celebrated Eucharist and shared a meal. The main menu for us during this week was chicken, rice, and beans, along with a variety of fruits—the latter thanks to Honduras being a tropical country.

We are beginning to talk about “parish planning” within our Province and how we might make decisions regarding where to stay and where we may decide to leave. The starting point for most parish or diocesan planning often seems to be, “How many priests are available.” In Honduras, the beginning point is “Where is the need?” and “Who is willing to come forward to respond to that need?”



The direction of the conversation really does depend upon which questions we ask first. If ordination is the starting point, then the planning will go forward with that in mind. If baptism is the starting point, and ministry flows from that, then the planning will proceed differently.

The small communities which we visited love to see their priest come to celebrate Eucharist with them—but they don't depend on him to carry out the various ministries that need to be done. Those who are baptized come forward and step into those positions. Some of these leaders are in their early 20s. As one member of our group stated: “They do so much with so little, while we have so much and do very little.”

It is truly a different way of “being church,” and perhaps it offers a more inclusive way than what we have seemingly embraced in our so-called educated, sophisticated mentality.

We, the Catholic Churches of South Odessa, have entered into a sister relationship with the parish of *La Exaltación de la Santa Cruz*. There will be many more visits as we continue to develop this relationship and learn from one another. I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to experience how “Church” is expressed and lived in Tanzania, in Vietnam, and now in Honduras. We have much to learn from all of these people. 🙏



PARISH OR PERISH?

James Betzen, C.P.P.S.

In late January, our province will have a meeting of those involved in parish ministry. This gathering is an opportunity to reflect on the ministries that our community desires to be a part of. I would like to share some thoughts out of my understanding of myself as a missionary of the Precious Blood and as one who has been in parish ministry since ordination.

It seems to me that any ministry to which our community devotes itself should be in line with our charism and mission. I consider the mission of our community to be renewal of the Church, ministry to the marginalized, reconciliation and preaching the Word of God. Many of our members carry out parish ministry animated by Precious Blood spirituality. As priests, brothers and companions, we devote ourselves to preaching, renewal and reconciliation. Many of us devote ourselves to ministry to the marginalized, bringing them more into the community of the Church.

Another aspect of ministry in our province is what our members bring to our community. We hope to draw vocations from men and women who are attracted to the charism and mission of our community. We hope to attract men and women who would like to devote their lives to renewal of the Church, preaching, reconciliation and ministry to the marginalized. Our members come to our community with both talents and passion for ministry. Each member has gifts that enable him or her to do ministry.

More importantly, I think that God has placed within us a passion for a ministry, for a cause, for people. The ministry to which our province directs us should take into account both our talents and our passion for ministry.

There are parishes that we have staffed for many years. I am pastor of a parish to which we have been committed for 125 years. As stated above, as a member of the Precious Blood community, I am motivated primarily by the charism and mission of my community; I am trying to practice the spirituality of the Precious Blood in a parish setting. I am committed to renewal of the Church, reconciliation, preaching and ministry to the marginalized. However, there are other agendas in our parish, like

keeping the high school and elementary school going and renovating the church, to name a few.

With the understanding that the ministry of our province should be consistent with our charism and mission, take into account our talents and passion for ministry, and still meet the needs of the parishes in which we work and to which we are committed, I wonder how we can do all of this. My concern is that as we grow smaller in the numbers of available parish ministers, the needs of the parishes will become more important than the charism and mission of our community and/or the talents and passion of our members.

It seems that history might be repeating itself. In the past, the needs of a minor seminary asked many of our members to serve in a ministry that they did not prefer. The needs of the minor seminary sometimes outweighed the concern for members' talents and their passion for ministry. There are parishes to which we are loyal because of longevity. It seems that the needs of these parishes in our community now outweigh the concern for the talents and passion for ministry of our members. Like a business, we are asking workers to do tasks for which they are ill-

equipped or have no passion. Morale and productivity in ministry will suffer, just as in a business when the needs of the company take precedence over the talents and passion of its workers.

What I would like to see in our community is more concern about our apostolate and charism than loyalty to parishes that we currently serve. If our apostolate is to serve immigrant communities, then, our loyalty to economic middle-class parishes will

hold us back from our true apostolate. Can't we come to an understanding that we have been successful in a particular parish and now we can move on to parishes with greater need? Can't we give priority to parishes that need renewal and reconciliation? And my personal concern, can't we give priority to parishes of immigrants over the parishes to which we are "holding on"? It seems to me that in being loyal to our apostolate and charism we will bear much more fruit in our ministry and attract new members to our community. 🙏

"I think that God has placed within us a passion for a ministry, for a cause, for people. The ministry to which our province directs us should take into account both our talents and our passion for ministry."

MEMORIES

Dave Kelly, C.P.P.S.

I wanted Roger to know—no, I wanted him to believe—that he would not be forgotten. I was driving him to Boys Town, Nebraska, some five hundred miles from Chicago, but a world away from what he knows. I wanted him to know that I wasn't just dumping him in a place where he would soon be forgotten. He had been treated for far too long as though he wasn't worthwhile, not good enough, disposable.

Perhaps, in part, that was the cause for much of his struggles; he was looking for some recognition, some sense of being someone, an identity. His gang affiliation, in large part, was to fulfill the need to belong.

I knew that something had to be done to keep Roger from following the same path as his brother, whom I buried less than a year ago. And so, in part, Roger and I going to Boys Town was an attempt at giving him a chance to

“The act of remembering and listening to the stories is an act of resistance that refuses to leave anyone behind, as though they are forgotten or unimportant.”

make something out of his life—or, more to the point, it was to try to save his life. But as I drove home, I couldn't help but feel that this was unfair. Over and over in my head, on that long drive home, I kept asking myself, why do we have to send our children five hundred miles away so that they have a chance to grow up? What's up that our kids have to be shipped away so that they can survive? I had an ugly feeling in my stomach.

I remember Roger, perhaps as much as anything, as an act of defiance or resistance to a system, a society that tends to forget kids like Roger.

The Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation does a lot of remembering. We create spaces where people can come together to remember. We regularly gather with families who have lost a loved one to violence just so those memories do not fade into nothingness. Too many have been told that they ought to move on with their lives, that they have to forget the past. A mother never forgets her child. And so we remember, but we strive to remember in a new way, in a way that does not cause further harm or keep us as victims. We seek to remember and tell stories in a way that allows us to continue on a journey of healing and reconciliation.

Memory is more than just an emotional recollection. It is also an act of resistance. Violence and trauma damage relationships. We become fragmented. We become isolated and live disconnected lives. We need to find ways to reconnect with others, to restore those old relationships and create new ones so that we find ourselves again. The damage done by violence and trauma so often causes isolation and loneliness. The act of remembering and listening to the stories is an act of resistance that refuses to leave anyone behind, as though they are forgotten or unimportant.

William Cavanaugh, in his book, *Torture and Eucharist*, says that the Eucharist is much more than a ritual repetition of the past. It is rather a literal re-remembering of Christ's body, a knitting together of the body of Christ by the participation of many in his sacrifice. If violence and trauma damage relationships and fracture the people of God, then the Eucharist re-members, re-collects the members into a new body.

The Eucharist makes us whole, a new creation. The Eucharist becomes an act of resistance, remembering those who have been forgotten, broken and disappeared. It is through the Eucharist that the Church reclaims her place in the world. We must be a people of memory, not to live in the past, but to stand strong and walk securely into the future.

I got a call from Roger today. 🙏



The New Creation
REFLECTIONS FROM THE
PRECIOUS BLOOD MINISTRY
OF RECONCILIATION

A local oncologist had been very supportive of the establishment of a hospice program for the Wichita area. However, referring one of his cancer patients to hospice was very difficult for him. I called his office to schedule a visit, and he graciously invited me to share lunch with him a few days later. During our visit I reminded him of the Medicare guidelines outlining the appropriateness of a hospice referral. Basically, this meant a patient was not likely to benefit from further curative intervention, with death reasonably expected to occur within six months or less.

After discussing this and other technical issues for a few minutes, I finally asked him directly, “Doesn’t there come a point when you have to acknowledge that nothing more can be done for a patient by way of curative intervention?” His immediate answer: “When it comes to treating a cancer patient, there is always something more that can be done.” Was he right or wrong?

My interaction with this physician illustrates how difficult and complex decision-making can be in the modern medical world. We are long past the time when “doing anything and everything possible” was the standard way to proceed. The field of medical ethics has come to the fore to provide guidance to the medical community in resolving the question of what is the right thing to do.

Right or wrong? The answer is often not a simple yes or no. The doctor was correct in that there is always another procedure available to treat cancer: surgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy being the standard interventions. But to what end or purpose? All of these treatments have very serious side effects, the degree depending on the severity of the intervention. Surgery is cutting; radiotherapy is burning; chemotherapy is poisoning. The difficult and painful dilemma is whether or not the negative side effects will be outweighed by long-term positive results.

If the reasonably expected long-term beneficial outcome will not outweigh the negative side effects, then the answer to the question about more curative intervention has to be *no*. Medical interventions are expected to provide a benefit. When that is not the case, then we are doing *to* patients, rather than *for* patients. Indeed, when is enough enough?

My work with Harry Hynes Memorial Hospice and Kansas Health Ethics has involved me extensively with the medical community as it wrestles with some of these very difficult questions. In many ways it is missionary work because this relationship with the medical community has allowed me to extend the healing ministry of Jesus in “foreign” territory. Our Precious Blood spirituality challenges us to be a life-giving presence in our world just as Jesus was totally a life-giving presence to us by shedding his blood to the last drop.

I often remind the medical community that their work must focus not just on curing (alleviating physical misfortunes), but above all must engage in healing. Jesus did not just address people in their physical affliction, but at the deepest level of their lives: emotional, social and spiritual wholeness. “He came that they might have life and have it more abundantly” (Jn 10:10).

What is difficult for the medical community to acknowledge is the redemptive value of suffering and death. Modern medicine seems compelled to extend physical existence at any and all costs. Suffering and death cannot be always seen as the enemy. Death eventually will become a friend and the final healer for all of us. Christ has shown us the way; death will be transformed by resurrection.

It is my goal to give witness to this spirituality in my ministry with the medical community. This involves teaching medical students at the Kansas University School of Medicine-Wichita branch. My classes concentrate on the basic

principles of medical ethics and how to break bad news. I have been teaching these classes for nearly 20 years, and it is gratifying to see many of the young women and men whom I taught applying in their daily practice what they learned in the classroom. The majority of them find it easier to refer to hospice than did the physician whom I described earlier.

These individuals generally feel comfortable in consulting with an ethics committee when they encounter situations with conflict involved. Membership in several ethics committees in the south central Kansas area encompasses an extensive part of my ministry. This includes both the formal monthly meetings and the consults that



MINISTRY IN THE MEDICAL WORLD

Tom Welk, C.P.P.S.

arise within the course of any one particular day.

Considerably less than 100 years ago, curative medical interventions were practically non-existent. Today an endless array of options is available. Modern medicine has used these to provide some tremendous benefits. Many more possibilities are on the horizon. What is yet to be determined is whether they will prove to be beneficial. Testing must be conducted. It is the function of an Institutional Review Board (IRB) to oversee trials and research to ensure that human beings will not be used as guinea pigs.

The Wichita medical community is nationally recognized for its cancer trials. I serve on the Wesley Medical Center and the Via Christi Regional Medical Centers IRBs to review these proposed trials. Clinicians on these boards review the scientific and medical aspects. My primary function is to ensure that nothing unethical will be done.

My interaction with medical professionals other than physicians is often as a guest lecturer at the various universities in our area, and by way of conducting workshops and speaking at conventions. I find these very rewarding and stimulating. These medical professionals are hungry for guidance in resolving the issues that come their way on a daily basis. The Terri Schiavo debate that made national headlines a few years ago is by no means an exceptional case.

Withholding or withdrawing medical interventions (especially those referred to as life support) are involved in 9 out of 10 deaths. When is it the right thing to continue these interventions? When is it the right thing to withhold or withdraw them?

This was the focus of the statement issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in September 2007. This statement is a follow-up to the much-debated 2004 allocution of Pope John Paul II. Essentially, both statements deal with the question of what comprises ordinary care (which is considered obligatory). These statements argue that water and food are ordinary ways to sustain life, and when a patient is unable to swallow, they must be supplied by whatever technical means are available.

What is forgotten in this insistence is the fact that water and food may be as common and available as air, but a physically impaired patient unable to swallow must have a “medical means” to supply these commodities.

Now it is in the arena of a medical intervention, and all medical interventions must be weighed from the benefit/burden ratio. This is the 500-year old teaching tradition of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has never taught that simply preserving physical existence is an absolute value. We do things *for* patients, not *to* them.

However, keep in mind that both of these statements are very limited in scope, dealing almost exclusively with those in a permanent vegetative state (PVS). We have served nearly 30,000 patients in Harry Hynes Hospice; very rarely do we have someone diagnosed with PVS.



Dr. Daniel Sulmasy, OFM, professor of medicine and director of the Bioethics Institute of New York Medical College has an excellent article (“Preserving Life? The Vatican & PVS”) on these statements in the December 7, 2007 issue of *Commonweal*. His analysis is right on target.

Briefly, Sulmasy reminds us that these statements are very narrowly drawn, i.e., dealing with patients in PVS; the removal of medically assisted nutrition hydration (commonly known as feeding tubes) is not prohibited in all cases. The statements were issued to counter the legalization of euthanasia in Europe—“an extreme position to counter an extreme position.” Sulmasy points out that the CDF statement will be counter-productive, since so many people are horrified at the prospect of being kept alive in a condition like Terri Schiavo’s. Rather than counter the euthanasia movement, it could likely give it more impetus.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you about the ministry in which I am engaged. There is a diversity of ministry among our membership. It is a diversity that serves the People of God well. Let us continue to support one another in those ministries as we strive to bring the Lord’s life-giving Blood to our time and place. 🙏



FROM FEAR TO FRIENDSHIP

Al Ebach, C.P.P.S.

The Church invites all people to pray for migrants throughout the world, appropriately beginning on the feast of Epiphany, when Jesus, Mary and Joseph had to live away from their homeland in fear of King Herod. The 2008 National Migration Week theme is *From Many, One Family of God*.

On February 2, 1999, Pope John Paul II, in an address, stated that "...the Spirit of Pentecost is at work to gather together into one the scattered children of God." People throughout the world are being scattered for a variety of reasons—separated from families, from neighborhoods and from homelands.

The Bishops of the United States and Mexico, in their collaborative pastoral letter, *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*, urge the people of parishes to create a welcoming home for all our brothers and sisters in Christ. We as a Church are called to celebrate the Word of God and the Sacraments, which invite all people to be one in the name of Jesus Christ.

Among the principles that form the foundation of Catholic Social Teaching are the following which pertain specifically to this issue:

- People should not be forced to migrate due to a lack of opportunities in their homeland.
- People have a basic right to move to another land in order to support themselves and their families.
- Every nation has the right to control its border, although this right carries with it the responsibility to accommodate migrant flows.
- Refugees and asylum seekers, fleeing either war and persecution or natural disaster, have a right to protection.
- The dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants must be respected.

In the resource material sent to parishes to use during the Week of Migration, the story of the feeding of the five thousand in the Gospel of Mark is used to demonstrate how God's abundance is to be shared. In this Gospel, the disciples are concerned that if they share there may not be enough. It seems that today people are still concerned about sharing their resources, thinking that if they share they may run out. We fail to trust in the passage of the

feeding of the five thousand which demonstrates that the miracle is in the sharing. It is when resources are hoarded that there is not enough for everyone.

What are our fears about migration and immigration? Why is it so difficult for our nation, or any nation for that matter, to address immigration reform? Maybe the bigger question is: How can all nations share resources to protect people so they are not forced to migrate?

The answers to these and other questions are as varied as the people who claim to have the solutions. Perhaps the starting point is in our letting go so that we can hear some of the truth. In the pastoral letter cited earlier, the bishops of the United States and Mexico challenge us to respond to various Calls: to Conversion, Communion, Solidarity, and to Evangelization. All of these calls, these challenges, are about justice, hospitality, and the setting aside of fear and competition.

Where fear exists, there can never be true justice, let alone, hospitality. So, what are the fears? Some of the fears we hear about in the political arena in the United States are that jobs are being taken from citizens, that it puts a strain on health care and the education systems, that other languages and cultures disrupt the norm, and heaven forbid, there may be criminals and terrorists among those who migrate. Again, it is in the sharing of our resources that fears are dispelled and miracles are encountered.

"We have a responsibility to be people of justice and hospitality—and those of us who are called to Precious Blood spirituality need to be actively involved in inviting the alien and foreigner into our midst."

As Church we have a responsibility to be people of justice and hospitality—and those of us who are called to Precious Blood spirituality need to be actively involved in inviting the alien and foreigner into our midst. It is too easy to make this a political issue and let the politicians deal with it. With more than twenty million immigrants in our country we cannot help experiencing them in our communities.

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

WHY I CHOSE CPPS LIFE

Dominic Nban Anh Bui

Four years ago, on February 22, 2004, I became a pledged candidate of the Kansas City Province. Why did I choose the Precious Blood Community? Why didn't I choose a different one? To understand this, we have to go back into the past.

Following the turn of events on April 30, 1975, Vietnam's entire education system was molded into socialist republic policies. Many families like mine could not send their children to school. Seminaries were closed. Most seminarians turned to other alternatives.

When I was a boy, no one directed me toward religious life. Towards the end of the 1980s, religious life came back, thanks to the reformation policy of the Vietnam Government. In 1990 I took the entrance exam and was accepted into the inquiry program of the Vietnamese Dominicans. After one year of inquiry, I was notified that I did not have enough of the required qualities to become a priest of the Order of Preachers. My life turned to a different direction.

In 1993, while pursuing studies in business administration, I heard in class and in the society at large that people dared to publicly criticize negative and/or unjust activities happening in the society. In 1995, those who pursued law studies would no longer be subjected to having their backgrounds checked by the authorities. And so I chose to study law with the desire to be able to be of assistance to victims of oppression and injustice. In the years of studying law, I came to an awareness that if I entered into social activism alone, I would sink deeply into whirlpools of atheism.

In 2000, through a priest in my hometown, I met the c.p.p.s. in Vietnam. The person in charge of c.p.p.s. vocations in Vietnam at that time was Father Lac. All through the process of inquiry and discernment, I recognized that the c.p.p.s. way of life resembles closely the life of the Jesus Christ of the Gospel. Precious Blood spirituality never compromises with that which hinders life, and strongly emphasizes the two aspects of "renewal and reconciliation." In studying c.p.p.s. history, I learned that Saint Gaspar del Bufalo never yielded to the unjust demands of Napoleon, nor did he to the popes when their orders

were not based on the Gospel. Such is the value needed to be preached and developed in Vietnam.

In the past, Vietnamese people have undergone many wars. In Vietnam, as well as in the U.S., still there are deep wounds in the hearts. Peoples' lives in Vietnam are still hungry for temporal as well as spiritual replenishment. For example, "Vietnam ranks second in exporting rice but every year there are still hundreds of thousands of people who have rice to eat only at occasions of feast days, Lunar New Year, or when they are sick" (Mr. Cao Duc Phat, Vietnam's Minister of Agriculture, in his response to the People's Congress inquiries of November 11, 2007). The Second Vatican Council ended more than 40 years ago, but today much of the Council's promulgations are still foreign to Vietnamese Catholics; the translation of the Roman Missal into Vietnamese is still not fully complete!



Dominic Nban Anh Bui

After seven years of meeting with, listening to and observing, I saw in Father Lac and Father Dien their faithfulness to the values of the Gospel and their sincerity in living daily life. I also found the spirit of "renewal and reconciliation" active in their lives. I especially felt the spirit of hospitality and kindness through meetings with Fathers Mark Miller, Barry Fischer, James Urbanic, Al Ebach, Garry Richmeier and Dennis Kinderman. Therefore, I am confident to devote my life to the way of the c.p.p.s. I realize that there will be many difficulties ahead, but trusting in God's providence and in the Founder's intercession, I commit myself.

Pope Benedict XVI appreciates highly Francis Xavier Cardinal Thuan Van Nguyen's testimonies of "Reconciliation and Hope." I think "Reconciliation and Hope" should be the message for the Catholic Church in Vietnam, and for those who desire to do mission in Vietnam. 🙏

On February 17, 2008, Dominic will celebrate Definitive Incorporation into the Society of the Precious Blood.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I found Fr. Richmeier's article, *Created in God's Image*, to be one of the best and most profound I have read in any C.P.P.S. newsletter. I was moved to offer the following comments in response.

God's creation is indeed good—including and especially we humans. Created in God's image, we are intelligent realities or persons, values, goods—intrinsically good at the core and therefore not stained, dirty, defective, depraved and corrupt. Human beings are values simply as persons, without exceptions and without conditions of any kind—such as race, sex, nationality, financial status, organizational membership, office or title.

At the time of Jesus, many religious and civil leaders were missing the mark. They failed to relate to others as persons, equal values in themselves, which would have entailed justice (giving all their due)—and also love. Many related to the poor and the sick—and in some regards, women—as inferior or bad or even untouchable outcasts. In some cases they connected this to what they saw as YAHWEH's punishment. This was, however, the authorities' mere projection of YAHWEH relating to persons as objects, of YAHWEH missing the mark as they themselves did.

Jesus, on the other hand, helps people make the mark, i.e., saves us from missing the mark. Jesus related correctly and justly to all people as persons with God-given dignity and value. He associated with the poor, touched the sick, and talked to women in public. He had significant inclusive meals. Expectedly, the righteous and superior authorities rejected him and his divine kind of relating.

Yet, in trying to get rid of him and his kind of relating, the authorities gave Jesus the opportunity to prove that he really did relate to all persons as persons and values in themselves. This is what Good Friday and the Blood of Jesus, who is Emmanuel, was about—proof of God's kind of relating and love so that our relating could become this divine kind of relating and love. Good Friday was not an appeasement sacrifice to an unjust, non-loving, vengeful and punishing Ego. God is not and never has been such, except in the idolatrous minds of the spiritually immature.

Jesus enlightened and empowered us to relate to one another as he related to us—to love one another as he loved us. Since loving one another is following Jesus and

being a Christian, not loving one another is not following Jesus and not being a Christian.

Jesus said in effect that we are all values in ourselves, without exception and without conditions of any kind. Furthermore, Jesus empowered each of us to recognize ourselves as such and to relate to others accordingly in words, actions, and reactions—especially in the significant act of forgiveness.

Imagine a sick person at the time of Jesus who believed—as told—that the illness was a punishment for being bad. Touched by Jesus, this person felt OK, i.e., good and not bad. However, this rebel Jesus was now himself unclean for having touched the sick bad person—or so the authorities asserted.

This same Jesus dared to tarnish and even jeopardize the superior status of men by talking to women in public. He knew also that the poor were often poor because of the righteous and the greedy, not as the result of divine punishment. Jesus did not agree with the significantly exclusive meal rituals of “good” people. Like the other prophets before him, Jesus asserted that what YAHWEH wanted most of all was justice and love.

“Even when we try our best to do so, there is nothing that any of us can do to stop God from relating to us as persons with intrinsic value.”

Even when we try our best to do so, there is nothing that any of us can do to stop God from relating to us as persons with intrinsic value. The same should then be true of our relating to others. (I remember a statement by Fr. Dennis Kinderman at the 2003 Amici Reunion: “Each of us is better than our worst mistake.”)

With and through Jesus there is no city of God vs. the city of man. There is, instead, the kingdom, the reign and rule of God in the world. There is the common vocation of men and women to relate to one another in God's way of relating.

Today many parents gratefully celebrate the arrival of their new child as a uniquely precious value and blessing from God. The ritual of Baptism then presents them with the somewhat jarring image of an innate “stain” which must be removed—this the reminder of what was previously a much stronger emphasis on “Original Sin.” In these same churches the significant inclusive meal ritual of Jesus has become the Eucharist—a ritual celebration that often excludes certain categories of persons. All of this is done in the name of Jesus.

See Letter, continued on page 11...

Fear, continued from page 8...

The immigrants and migrants for the most part, are the poor among us today. The challenge for us is to become part of the miracle of God by not only sharing of our resources, but actually realizing that what we have already belongs to everyone, so designated as part of God's creation. It is only in this realization that we will ever be able to welcome the stranger among us. It is in our sharing that our fears are dispelled.

My answer to the migration and immigration situation is to rid ourselves of the unspoken fears that seem to consume us. This past summer when I spent a month in Mexico, I came to realize how debilitating fear can be. Without going into details, suffice it to say that fear initially kept me from learning and embracing the Mexican language and culture: the fear of making mistakes, the fear of being out there by myself, the fear of those who lived so differently than I, and the fear of the people themselves.

Only when I truly immersed myself into their lives was I able to trust and respect them. I did not realize that fear was the barrier until I was placed in a situation that challenged me to let trust push aside my fears. What impetus this was to my openness to learning, hospitality and acceptance.

Ridding ourselves of fears could make such a difference in our openness to accepting the stranger and the alien. There cannot be hospitality or generosity when we embrace fear. 🙏

The campfire flared on its very last ember.
They were all asleep now. The star would resemble
no other, because of its knack, at its nadir,
for taking an alien for its neighbor.

Joseph Brodsky, *Nativity*

WE COMMEND TO GOD

+Jimmy McKenny,
son of St. Joseph Companion June McKenny.

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Shirley Ablor,
mother of Newark Companion
Catherine MacDonald.

Butternut Companion Jerry Thier.

Butternut Companions
Dick and Alvera Seluga's grandson,
Greg, who will have open heart surgery.

Liberty Companion Joan Sage,
who is under hospice care.

Albia Companion Paul Beadle,
hospitalized with complications of COPD.

Phoung Maduell, sister-in-law of Newark
Companion Susan Maduell, undergoing
treatment for brain cancer.

New email for Br. Robert Herman, C.P.P.S.
robertcpps@yahoo.com

Letter, continued from page 10...

Pope John XXIII said, "The Gospel has yet to be discovered." He was talking to fellow Christians and fellow Roman Catholics. The Good News has yet to be discovered—the good news that Emmanuel relates to us as values in ourselves, intrinsically good, as we are to relate to one another.

We persons are in the process of being created. We can grow up. We can grow up inside as well as outside. Outside we start out not yet making the mark of feeding ourselves, walking, talking, and inside we start out not yet making the mark of relating correctly and justly to our fellow persons. But we are becoming-beings. We can change (metanoia). We can grow up. With the help of Jesus we can make the mark.

Each of us is a person with an unobservable, spiritual inner self and an observable, material outer self. Our observable exterior complements (and does not oppose) our unobservable interior. It is in and through our observable selves that our unobservable, inner selves are significantly revealed to and present with others. Material reality is part of creation and it is good—not bad. God created it all. God created it all good.

Jim Fitzgerald, *Amicus*
(classmate of Vince Hoying, Paul Sattler and Ed Weigel)

Come into animal presence.
No man is so guileless as
the serpent. The lonely white
rabbit on the roof is a star
twitching its ears at the rain.

The llama intricately
folding its hind legs to be seated
not disdains but mildly
disregards human approval.

What joy when the insouciant
armadillo glances at us and doesn't
quicken his trotting
across the track into the palm brush.

What is this joy? That no animal
falters, but knows what it must do?

That the snake has no blemish,
that the rabbit inspects his strange surroundings
in white star-silence? The llama
rests in dignity, the armadillo
has some intention to pursue in the palm-forest.

Those who were sacred have remained so,
holiness does not dissolve, it is a presence
of bronze, only the sight that saw it
falters and turned from it.

An old joy returns in holy presence.

Denise Levertov

Come Into Animal Presence

One of my favorite places to spend time is the home of two longtime friends, located in a beautiful canyon 90 miles southeast of Salt Lake City. In addition to the 12 llamas and one dog who reside



on the ranch, the area teems with wildlife and nature in all its quiet splendor. Deer, elk, squirrels, rabbits, moose, mountain

lions, a myriad of birds, and countless other creatures make themselves known through sight and sound.



It is not only the quiet that I enjoy there, and the joy of good friends, but the sacredness of it all. In the vastness of the landscape and the scarcity of human population, one more easily recognizes our place in the big picture of creation.



The poem printed here is a reminder to me that the sacred is always with us, right here, and not in a faraway, hard-to-find place, which can only be attained through some difficult spiritual discipline.

How often the divine can be experienced in the non-human world in all its great mystery. Someone once wrote that this particular poem "coaxed them closer to the heart of things."

Isn't that what we all want? May it be so in this new year of 2008. 🧑‍🎄

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