

The NEW WINE PRESS

Motivated by the Spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

December 2008-January 2009

VOLUME 18 No. 3

ONE FAMILY OF FAITH

Tom Webb

During the Christmas-Epiphany season we are mindful of Emmanuel, God with us. This is one of the pillars of our faith, the belief that God has uniquely and mysteriously become one with us in Jesus, who shared our daily lot and earthly pilgrimage, and who walks with us still through a vast array of experiences containing wide vicissitudes of joy and sorrow, hope and fear, love and hatred.

The feast days and readings of the early Christmas season reminded us that Jesus' life was vastly more troubled than we might like to believe. The cost of following Jesus is made apparent the day after Christmas when we recall the martyrdom of St. Stephen. The Feast of the Holy Innocents on December 28th recalls Herod's genocidal attack on the male Hebrew children.

What might this tell us? Is the church "anti-Christmas" because we are made mindful that suffering is part and parcel of human life? Is the joy we are encouraged to celebrate undermined by readings and feasts such as these? Isn't there a contradiction between the lights, colors and festive character of the season and some of the stories of the season?

One way to consider this tension is to recognize what faith in Jesus really calls us to. Faith is neither empty-headed nor romantic. Faith does not encourage us to ignore the darker moments and experiences of our lives. Rather faith calls us to levels of sobriety that are often denied by the commercialized season of good cheer. Faith truly becomes faith when we are confronted by darkness in our lives and cannot see the way and are forced to depend upon the light of God's grace in its many epiphanies to traverse through such times. And it is in the darkness that the blood of Christ calls forth a response.

The story of an immigrant day laborer I met last summer near my northern California home town may shed some light on faithfulness. Don Francisco, a middle-aged man of 53 years, was a Mexican immigrant living in the United States without legal authorization. In the popular parlance of this time he is "undocumented," an illegal resident possessing no legal recognition, status or standing before the law.

He was from Michoacan, a state located in central Mexico, bordered



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THE NEW WINE PRESS

*Missionaries of the Precious Blood
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, incorporated members, covenanted companions, and candidates, united in prayer, service and mutual support, characterized by the tradition of its American predecessors, are missionaries of these times with diverse gifts and ministries.

In a spirit of joy, we strive to serve all people—especially the poor—with care and compassion, hope and hospitality.

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

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Printed on recycled paper by
Trojan Press of North Kansas City

LEADERSHIP NOTES

I consider myself a seasoned traveler, but I must admit that I have met my match in India. It is a challenging country to visit and experience. Its great monuments and its pervasive poverty equal any place on earth. Its growing middle class is quite evident, as there are apartment and office buildings going up everywhere; its economy is robust. Yet more visible, both in the city and country, are people with absolutely nothing—a blanket and a small plate from which to eat, nothing more but the clothes they wear. Many have no shoes. And then there are the animals; goats and cows are everywhere, with camels and elephants in the more rural areas. Hygiene is low.

Fr. Francesco Bartoloni, our Moderator General announced a good year in advance that next meeting of Precious Blood major superiors would be in India. Fr. Amaladoss, the vicar in India, was eager to host us and put his country out front for other C.P.P.S. members to see. It was the first major C.P.P.S. meeting there since the Italian province founded the mission in India in the early 1980s. In some ways it was a coming out for the community. Nearly all those attending, myself included, had never been there. The country is almost directly opposite the United States, 11½ time zones from Kansas City.

Our meeting centered on leadership and mission. We met at the seminary in a rural area on the edge of the city of Bangalore, the new technological center of India. The students' schedule there reminded me of my seminary days in the 1960s, with early rising, work periods and a regimented life. Hospitality could not have been better. Our meeting days were spent in discussion, prayer, visiting and following the U.S. elections on TV. (There was often a chorus of "O-ba-ma" as one of the American delegates would walk into a room.) Conversation was animated. We also visited some of our missions and schools. We saw first hand how many poor people there are in India and how our missionaries care for orphans, operate a trade school and a nursing home, and live a common life.

The final two days of our meeting was the highlight for me. We flew to Goa—once a Portuguese enclave in India—and celebrated Mass at the tomb of St. Francis Xavier, our congregational patron. Having been stationed at the only C.P.P.S. parish dedicated to his name, it is a place I have always wanted to visit. The tomb and ornate church, cared for by the Jesuits, are the final resting place for this sainted missionary.

The students also presented two "talent nights" for us, a mixture of entertainment, comedy, religious morality plays and music. They were delightful and it reminded of my novitiate days of old.

My last two weeks were spent with twenty-one other Americans taking a Smithsonian tour of the country. We had daily lectures about Indian culture and religion, the caste system, geography and history. It was quite worthwhile. While almost every tourist visits the Taj Mahal—which is even more spectacular than all the hype—it was Varanasi, the holy Hindu city on the Ganges River, that was the most memorable for me. People bathe in the Ganges, set up funeral pyres on the banks and worship the river as the home of their gods. Watching a dozen sunset



C.P.P.S. IN INDIA

Jim Urbanic, C.P.P.S.

cremations from a boat in the river is an event not to be forgotten.

We also had a chance to visit Delhi, look for Bengal tigers in a national park (we did not spot any), and visit homes to see how middle class families live. Our two Indian guides were excellent. They were also greatly saddened with the news of the terror attacks in Mumbai, a city not on our list. They so love their country and these attacks left them shaken. In our last few days we were more diligent about security.

I thank the members of the province who substituted for me at Warrensburg during November. It was certainly nice to go, but equally good to return to American food and even American traffic. 🍷



Fr. Jim and St. Francis Xavier in Goa.

Family, continued from page 1...

by the Pacific Ocean to the west and surrounded by the states of Colima, Guanajuato and Guerrero.

He had come to the United States several years ago after the shoe factory in which he worked was shut down and moved to China—where even cheaper labor and conditions more favorable to the owners were found. Now on this cool, foggy August morning he waited patiently along with thirty or so other men for the opportunity to work even for a few hours. They all stood by idly under the small canopy on the edge of a dirt parking lot, talking and joking with each other, all the while anxiously glancing back and forth as cars and trucks passed by.

With work then in short supply as the recession steadily grew, I wondered how he and his friends survived. The lucrative housing construction industry which drew many day laborers to California had already begun to decline severely by the summer of 2008. Vineyard-related jobs—usually another draw in California for immigrant laborers—were hard to come by. Other forms of work like helping someone move or clean-up a yard were also in scant supply.

I asked Don Francisco how much he earned during an average month. “Around \$600,” he told me. He shared an apartment with several other men and together they pooled their meager resources living precariously from month to month. Despite their small monthly income they were still able to send something back home to their families.

I wondered aloud how he was able to endure each day so packed with radical uncertainty, forms of which I had never known. He responded earnestly “Es el milagro de Dios”[it is by a miracle of God].

In this season when we celebrate the miraculous renewal of hope through the birth of an infant to a young Jewish virgin, perhaps it is wise to recall that Jesus’ birth wasn’t the only extraordinary event two thousand years ago. Other miracles like the very survival of Jesus’ family during the Herodian persecutions and their subsequent hurried flight from their homeland remind us that faith may summon us to make extraordinary responses to keep hope alive.

As church we are mindful of National Migrant’s Week, January 4th–11th. Don Francisco’s story may remind us that the blood of Christ summons faithful responses which may profoundly transcend our very understanding. The blood of Christ calls from the road sides and shadows of our lives encouraging us to look more closely and more carefully. It is in such moments that we as participants in Precious Blood life become acutely aware of what faith demands. 🍷

“Faith truly becomes faith when we are confronted by darkness in our lives and cannot see the way and are forced to depend upon the light of God’s grace in its many epiphanies.”



Tom Webb is in vocational discernment with the province.

FAMILY IN SERVICE

Christopher Hoyt



In this Christmas-Epiphany season, I am pleased to bring you news of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood Volunteer Program. I would like to extend a very warm greeting to the readership of *The New Wine*

Press, those of you whom I have had the privilege of meeting, and those of you afar. I hope that this season finds you among family and friends, united in a spirit love and generosity.

Oftentimes, I observe how the holidays can further serve to underscore the loneliness and hardships experienced by the marginalized members of our own communities: those without the inherent benefits of close family and friends, and those suffering from loss, sickness, isolation, and poverty. Personally, I encounter a yearly challenge in Christmas, when I am constantly reminded of the abounding blessings in my own life, but struggle out of the guilt I feel for those who go without. However, I find hope in the new Kingdom we are called to create, and draw inspiration from religious members and laity who labor on behalf of our brothers and sisters who face such serious challenges.

I recently encountered Precious Blood spirituality when I was hired to begin the Volunteer Program here in Liberty. As members and Companions have educated me in St. Gaspar's life and the community's missions, I am happy to find myself so closely connected to its tenets of service and reconciliation. After graduating from the University of Notre Dame in 2005 with degrees in Film and Spanish, I coordinated activities and directed the volunteer program for Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos in Mexico (Our Little Brothers and Sisters), a home for orphaned and abandoned children.

During the three years I lived in Mexico, I witnessed something remarkable: these humble children shared with and supported each other from the little they had on a daily basis, and lived more generously than anyone I had ever known in developed countries. Since returning to the

United States in August, I find that operating out of a spirit of generosity and hospitality poses an enormous challenge in our culture. Without belaboring the point by reiterating these arguments we know all too well, let me say that I feel newly refreshed by the community's commitment to answer this difficult call.

As we begin to look at new ways of further increasing the presence of Precious Blood spirituality in our world, it logically follows that the inclusion of lay members of the community stands as a necessity. The Companions play a crucial role in this effort, and model this spirituality in their daily lives. But what can we do for men and women who have never encountered Precious Blood spirituality? Indeed, how can we incorporate those people who live and breathe that call on a daily basis, but are unfamiliar with our communities? Participation in the Kansas City Province Volunteer Program is one such way that adult men and women can come to know Precious Blood spirituality.

Readers of the *Weekly Wine Press* will have seen our mission statement and learned of our most recent progress. But for those of you seeing this for the first time, please allow me to explain more about the workings of this program.

Our Mission Statement: *Precious Blood Volunteers strive to participate in the spirituality and charism of the community through study, prayer, and ministry. We foster the spirituality in our ministry with the men and women of the community, living and teaching the Word of God, and serving the marginalized, especially the poor.*

To be more specific, this program supports current missions in the Kansas City Province with volunteers who will study Precious



“During the three years I lived in Mexico, I witnessed something remarkable: these humble children shared with and supported each other from the little they had on a daily basis, and lived more generously than anyone I had ever known in developed countries.”

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THE CHARISM OF STICKING TOGETHER

Garry Richmeier, C.P.P.S.

What makes community? I have been reflecting on that question since we as the leadership team celebrated the feast of St. Gaspar with the community at St. Charles Center in Carthagena, OH in October. It was a good celebration and it gave us a chance to visit with the members of our province who live there.

I have not spent a lot of time with members of the Cincinnati province who live at St. Charles, so each visit tests my memory of names and faces. And there are always the mutual re-introductions.

I noticed a repeating pattern this time as I told people my name. A number of people said something like "Oh, you write in *The New Wine Press*." And each time I found myself preparing for the next comment (the next shoe to drop) which I imagined would be some kind of condemnation or ridicule or anger about some things I've written. After all, when I write I don't exactly "tow the party line" of the church. But not one person said anything to me that was not welcoming and friendly.

In our community there are as many different views about any given subject as there are members. But despite the problems these differences cause us sometimes we somehow find ways to continue on together. We know there is something that ties us together even if we have to introduce ourselves to each other every time we meet. We know that we are "stuck" with each other, and we have to find ways to live together in this community. This is the relational "glue" that enables us to continue Gaspar's work of together proclaiming God's Word.

This sense of community is sorely lacking in our world today. The recent presidential election highlighted the differences between the candidates but did little to remind us Americans that we are all in this together. This experience will probably help to strengthen the idea in congress that one

side of the aisle doesn't need the other.

The "powers that be" in the church sometimes do the same thing. Like when it is subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) communicated that the church doesn't need or want certain groups with views different than what is handed down from the top. These groups include women called to priesthood, homosexuals, many democrats, the ecumenically minded, the non-hierarchically minded, and whoever else is deemed "non-orthodox." Can there really be a true church "community" when relational connectedness is sacrificed on the altar of religious orthodoxy?

Another example of lack of community is when the United States takes unilateral action in the world, effectively saying that it doesn't need other countries. This makes it almost impossible to solve any international problem since working together as a world community is a requirement.

"But maybe our stubborn commitment to staying connected in some way, despite driving each other crazy sometimes, is something valuable we have to offer the church and the world. Maybe our example can speak loudly that it is not only possible, but absolutely necessary to deal with life together if we are to truly proclaim the gospel message and build the reign of God."

People often say there is something different about Precious Blood priests and brothers compared to diocesan priests. I suspect that one thing they are sensing is the positive effects of the commitment to live community. To put it bluntly, putting up with each other in community (accepting each other) probably makes it easier for us to put up with/accept people with whom we work and minister. And people notice. In the C.P.P.S. we do not live community perfectly of course, and we are well aware of how we are not always together. But maybe our stubborn commitment to staying connected in some way, despite driving each other crazy sometimes, is something valuable we have to offer the church and the world. Maybe our example can speak loudly that it is not only possible, but absolutely necessary to deal with life together if we are to truly proclaim the gospel message and build the reign of God.

The next time I visit St. Charles in Carthagena I will probably struggle to remember names once again, and will be re-introducing myself to residents. I may even get into a discussion with someone who disagrees with what I write in *The New Wine Press*. But we will know that the disagreement will not threaten our relationship as community members as long as we both realize we are in this together. And that's what makes community. 🍷

A PRAIRIE WALK INTO COMMUNITY

Beth Saner, F.S.P.A.



The Missionaries of the Precious Blood and the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of La Crosse, WI have long been friends. We have had Precious Blood priests as chaplains at both St. Rose Convent, our motherhouse, and at St. Francis Hospital, now Franciscan Skemp Healthcare, in La Crosse. In our own way, Richard Bayuk and I participated in that long connection when we ministered together in Campus

Ministry at Viterbo College in the early 1990s.

Community connections have a way of enduring and this article is one of those enduring threads—the direct result of both personal and congregational friendship. As one of two F.S.P.A. incorporation (formation) co-ministers, I originally wrote the article for the F.S.P.A.

Incorporation Newsletter, *Circle of Connections*, but it seems to have taken a life of its own, inviting me to adapt it for others. This is one of those rewrites.

I begin with a question. How is the process of religious formation like the life of a prairie? In a recent visit to the Chicago Botanical Gardens, I discovered that a prairie ecosystem could be a metaphor for community life and a guidepost for the formation process. Let me share some of what I learned and how it speaks to me.

A great prairie begins with great individual plants. The principle seems to apply beautifully to community: a great community begins with great individual sisters/brothers. In fact, are we not invited by our creator to be all that we can

be? Is it not part of our responsibility to become healthy and whole even as we strive to live more deeply into the life of our chosen congregation? Is it not appropriate to invite our newest members-in-process into that same search for the healthy and whole self in order to strengthen the life of what is already a great community?

A healthy prairie depends on diversity of plant life and of the insects, birds and small mammals that live there. The more diversity, the healthier the prairie. The corollary seems obvious: the greater the diversity among the members, the healthier congregational life will be.

We know we love our unity, the way we connect and bind one to another and share deeply of common values and goals. Do we also love our diversity—the ways in which we are radically different and unique one from another? If it is true that the very health of the community calls us to diversity, then it is of utmost importance for us to begin to open our hearts to the great diversity among us.

This means more than tolerating our differences; it means learning to love what makes each of us unique and special. It means celebrating the wondrous mystery of a whole made up of diverse parts.

“We know we love our unity, the way we connect and bind one to another and share deeply of common values and goals. Do we also love our diversity—the ways in which we are radically different and unique one from another? If it is true that the very health of the community calls us to diversity, then it is of utmost importance for us to begin to open our hearts to the great diversity among us.”

If we are to continue into the future, it is essential that we embrace as gift the diversity that new people bring to our life together. The health of a congregation requires members to let go the desire for a homogeneous community as they fully embrace the greatest diversity possible.

A complex subterranean network engaging in a mutual exchange of nutrition and energy supports the life of the prairie. The truth gleaned here suggests that we all need to be grounded and rooted and engaged in a mutual exchange of energy for life. The primary grounding for every community

member is the One who is the very ground of our being. This is what the spirituality of the founders is all about for every community.

The greatest part of our life as individuals in community is *not* visible, yet it is the support for the life of the whole. Perhaps each of us needs to ask two questions, namely, what do I bring and

what does each person bring to our life together without which the community would be less healthy and less whole? If we truly begin to see ourselves and each other as precious and irreplaceable gifts involved in a mutual exchange of energy for the life of the whole, then, would we not welcome and embrace the energy of our new members as a vital resource in our ongoing life and health?

For a diverse prairie to survive it needs space. When we hear the word *space*, do we think of external space or internal space? I wonder if what we need to cultivate is an internal spaciousness that allows us to meet each other and our new members with gracious hospitality in the daily living of community life. If my internal space is enlarged, there is room to meet you with love and compassion rather than with judgment and criticism. In the spacious environment of the heart, all members of a community could find room to live and to grow.

Prairies need fire to survive. Fire releases nutrients into the soil, kills invasive plants and clears the ground of dry, dead plants. A healthy community also needs a kind of fire—the dynamic tensions that are part of living and working together. When the fire comes are we willing to stand the heat for the sake of the life that is emerging? Can we allow our new members to endure fire for the sake of new life?



These reflections certainly are not a significant study of the prairie ecosystem. Nor do they articulate fully the life of community or the interaction of new members with the congregation. They are the musings of one

formation minister on a walk on a sunny day in Chicago and shared with all of you as a conversation starter around healthy community, diversity and new membership today? Are you ready to walk into your congregational diversity and to meet there the wonderful individuals who are seeking to become part of who you are together? 🌻

Beth Saner is a spiritual director and co-facilitator of the Spiritual Direction Internship at Claret Center in Chicago.

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Blood spirituality, many for the first time. Volunteers will be asked to live in community with members or Companions to impart an example of how the spirituality is lived out, and to provide support to volunteers throughout the one-year commitment they are asked to serve.

The program intends to offer volunteers the opportunity to work directly with the marginalized of society, particularly with communities stricken by poverty, violence, sickness, and political struggle. While undoubtedly there is an overabundance of need to be addressed abroad, we will begin work on a domestic level, and then progress to other areas if and when the time comes.

The program is young, to be sure, but ambitious in its undertaking. It has determined sites in need of full-time volunteers, and continues to identify the need for volunteers in communities where members and Companions have made that need known by contacting the Volunteer Office. The Volunteer Committee now collaborates to compose an Advisory Board, which, among other responsibilities, will be integral in volunteer recruitment and fundraising for the program. The future Kansas City Province website will be a valuable resource for our applicants, and will feature a list of our work sites, photographs, and an online application. Further financial and recruitment efforts by members and Companions are genuinely welcomed.

As our organizational endeavors come together, this program strives to introduce Precious Blood spirituality to a 21st century world in new and exciting ways. I look forward to collaborating with you in this joint effort, and I am appreciative of the community's support thus far. I wish you all a very Happy New Year full of renewed hope and joy. 🌻

Christopher Hoyt is the Director of the Precious Blood Volunteer Program.

FROM DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT

Dewey McConville & Brad McConville, Jr.

The year was 1982, and my husband Brad and I were blessed with a beautiful baby girl. Now we had five healthy, wonderful children. Yet, I was so sad. I cried easily and for long periods of time. I didn't want to see anyone, not even family or friends. I was always tired, but I couldn't sleep at night. I was wracked by feelings of low self-esteem, excessive guilt, and even thoughts of death. I did not understand any of this. I was in a very good marriage, and now I had the big family I had always dreamed about. But the postpartum depression was so severe it was completely disabling.

I tried to tell my best friend how I was feeling, but she was shocked at my revelation. How in the world could I possibly be depressed? I had everything going for me. She didn't understand, and I was so embarrassed. I never told anyone ever again.

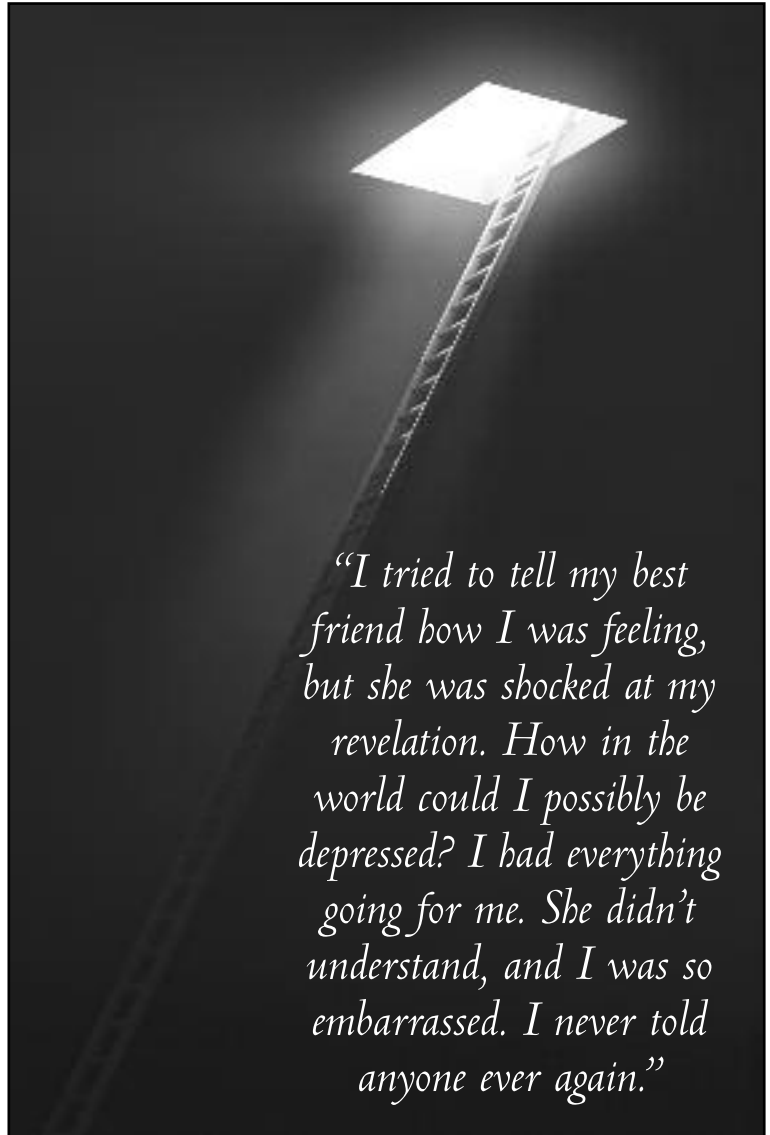
My depression lasted four months. Thankfully, with medication, I completely recovered. But I have never forgotten the feeling of being in the "black hole," of being so ashamed—and the overwhelming despair. I recall feeling like a failure for being unable to cure my depression with prayer. Today, of course, I don't believe we can "pray our way" out of a severe depression any more than we can "pray our way" out of a diabetic coma.

Depressive disorders are common and highly treatable, and at the same time potentially lethal. Depression is one of the most ancient, common and distressing afflictions of the human race. There are numerous biblical references to depression and despair, including references in Genesis, Job, Philippians, Peter, Corinthians and Kings. Psychiatrists classify and manage depressive symptoms based on their duration, severity, and causative etiology.

Symptoms of clinical depression include low mood most days of the week, decreased enjoyment of life, feelings of guilt and worthlessness and decreased pleasure out of life. In addition, depression is characterized by fatigue, disturbances of sleep, abnormal appetite, excessive anxiety and a reduced ability to focus and concentrate. Some

people with depression seem to have primarily physical symptoms, but depression can be so persistent that it may become difficult to picture ever feeling better. Some people suffer from thoughts or fantasies of death and dying, and may even take steps to end their own lives.

For the last eighteen years, I have been employed as a physician assistant in a family practice office in our rural community of Centerville, IA. In this capacity, I have been privileged to provide



"I tried to tell my best friend how I was feeling, but she was shocked at my revelation. How in the world could I possibly be depressed? I had everything going for me. She didn't understand, and I was so embarrassed. I never told anyone ever again."

care for patients of all ages. I have always felt blessed to be a physician assistant (PA), as my patients all call me by my first name. I believe it is precisely because I am *not* a doctor that these patients feel like they are not wasting my time. They are comfortable sharing with me the secrets of their heart. When they reveal to me the pain and despair of depression, I consider it both an honor and a responsibility to help them.

I try to walk with them, helping them to understand that depression is an illness, not a moral weakness. It usually has a genetic component, and can be the result of certain illnesses, hormonal changes, medications, or major life stressors. It may also come about seemingly at random.

Depressive symptoms lasting more than two weeks without an alternative medical explanation likely represent a major depressive episode, which is an indication to consider treatment. However, major depressive disorder is not the only type of depression. There are other psychiatric illnesses which may present as depression, such as postpartum depression, seasonal affective disorder, bipolar (manic-depressive) disorder, alcoholism, and drug addiction. For this reason, it is best to have a physician make the diagnosis of depression.

Although the standard treatment for uncomplicated depression is based on medication, doctors may also recommend therapy such as cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, supportive, group or various other types. Although medication may take two to six weeks to relieve all symptoms, an untreated episode of depression may last up to two years! Depression ranks among the highest of all medical illness in the U.S. in terms of total medical costs, missed days of work, and disability. For these reason, most doctors recommend treating a single episode if severe or if it lasts over two weeks; and if a second episode occurs, treatment is always indicated.

What is the best way to get better? Over fifty years of research shows the optimal treatment for most types of depression may be a combination of medication and some form of talk therapy. Despite this, not all depressed people need therapy—just as there are many people with depression who have emotional and personal conflicts that cannot be relieved with medication alone. The medications released since

1990 are not only safer and more effective, but they have less undesirable side effects than those released a generation before.

It is always helpful to have a doctor with experience in the treatment of mental disorders. If the depression requires hospitalization in a psychiatric hospital, or if it is not relieved by two or three trials of medication, a referral to a psychiatrist is necessary. Therapy may also be provided by a psychiatrist, however more commonly a psychologist, nurse, or social worker trained in therapy will provide this service, usually in collaboration with the prescribing doctor.



Many insurance companies cover therapy in a limited fashion, so it is best to check with your provider to determine the extent of coverage and number of sessions covered. For the many Americans without insurance coverage, treatment is more complicated.

Thankfully, many Catholic agencies that are mission-not-money driven still provide therapy services to the underserved. Our most critical message for friends and family of someone suffering from depression is this: Get them help and keep them safe. Depression, like diabetes and heart disease, is treatable and should never be fatal.

“Gaspar had a preferential option for the poor and the marginalized. No one feels more marginalized than someone who is in the depths of depression.”

Isaiah 61:1-2A.10-11: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release the prisoners.* As followers of St. Gaspar, this is our assignment.

We need to recognize the signs of depression in ourselves and in others with whom we live and work daily. Gaspar had a preferential option for the poor and the marginalized. No one feels more marginalized than someone who is in the depths of depression.

Are those with whom we live and work showing the signs and symptoms? We must reach out to them, tell them we understand, and affirm their importance as loved by God and others, and encourage them to seek medical help. In some cases, it may be necessary to do more than encourage them. It may be necessary to intervene in order to save a precious life. 🙏

Dewey McConville is a Precious Blood Companion. She lives in Centerville, LA where she works as a Physician Assistant. Dr. Brad McConville, Jr. is her son. He is currently completing a joint residency in Psychiatry and Internal Medicine at Tulane University in New Orleans, LA.

VOCATIONS OFFICE

Sharon Crall and Joe Miller, C.P.P.S.

The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) is a professional organization of women and men committed to vocation awareness, invitation, and discernment to consecrated life as brothers, sisters, and priests. NRVC shares in the mission of Jesus in serving its members by providing education, resources, and other supportive services for personal and professional growth.

Every two years the NRVC hosts a convocation inviting all its members from across the United States, Canada, and other countries. This year's convocation was held October 9-13, in Louisville, Kentucky and we were fortunate to be able to attend. Members enjoyed an interactive event with three keynote speakers, workshops, prayer and Eucharist, resource sharing, and wonderful Kentucky hospitality. The convocation followed a theme of "Called by One, Invited by Many."

Fr. Donald Senior, C.P., president of Catholic Theological Union in Chicago spoke of the example we find for our vocational work in the great missionary, St. Paul, who used networking and collaboration in his work. He then shifted to the Gospel writers who showed Jesus slowly kneading the hearts of the people into the Way. What happened to Jesus and the disciples will happen to us. He pointed out that Christian life is a call, not a choice, beginning already with the baptismal call. Life is never the same after Baptism, and we must be patient with the discernment process in people. The first disciples had Jesus as their mentor and that still holds true today as a good mentor knows how to gently lead a person on their journey. As we continue our Christian journey, we are to be people of hope who depend upon each other. As Precious Blood people may we never forget whose we are and to whom we belong as we journey through life.

Sr. Maria Cimperman, O.S.U., Assistant Professor at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX spoke about the many thresholds we encounter when we walk on holy ground. Thresholds can call us to a sacred place and space, which may lead us to greater freedom and creativity. Sometimes thresholds only become visible after we have crossed them, and upon crossing, one cannot go back. Christians must be bearers of hope, which often brings them to a threshold, being guided by the Holy Spirit. Our bond of charity brings us as a community to many thresholds.

Sr. Maria then took us to the thresholds which could be individual or communal. Using the image of a midwife who helps to bring about new life, she said there is a need to assess what we need to leave behind and what we need to hold on to as we stand before the threshold. We may be uncomfortable in this moment, but ultimately we have to make a move. There may be many

questions, requests, and new voices heard at the threshold, and there can be many gifts to be found.

One of these gifts can be an invitation to grow—from sources within or outside the community. Another is communal discernment to understand who we are in response to the signs of the times. A third gift is a radical availability which implies that we are completely open to God's call. Temptation, the fourth gift, challenges our trust in God as we decide whether to turn back or face what God has in mind for us in the future. As a Precious Blood community, what threshold do we stand before at this time and what is our participation in this congregational threshold?

The presentation then led us to consider four possibilities of what we might find across the threshold. First is a greater sense of belonging or identity, which means knowing self and community

better. This possibility may ask us to let go of unneeded things. Second is creativity which moves us to integrate our lives into a new and deeper vision beyond our individual visions. This calls for an openness to ideas from all of the members. Third is a deeper experience and understanding of community through a dialogue rooted in charity. Fourth is a greater realization of solidarity,

which calls us to be a global community. This leads us to speak out together for the gospel and invites us to an openness to learn God's vision in our world today.

Sr. Maria did warn that not everyone in the community would be able to cross the threshold at the same time, and so there is the challenge to be sensitive to each other's individual journey. What threshold has our Precious Blood Community crossed and how visibly have we witnessed God's vision to the world today?

Fr. James Martin, S.J., associate editor of *America* magazine, was the third speaker. His

See *Vocations*, continued on next page...





The New Creation

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PRECIOUS BLOOD MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

It all began when nine teenage girls in Chicago's Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center decided to "have some fun" as they put it. They are teenagers who don't always weigh consequences prior to acting out. But it was more serious than having fun, and it ended with harsh consequences.

They were taken to a separate section. There each would remain locked in a separate room 23 hours a day. They would have one hour out of confinement, two girls at a time, to work on a puzzle or just sit in that section furnished with plastic seats, some tables and the main console attended by staff. The TV, reading materials, paper and writing or drawing tablets were gone. It seemed a fitting punishment, or did it?

Some staff and administration folks at the detention center were not so sure about that "lock down" for the nine. What would they learn from spending all that time locked behind a steel door with a small window, eating there in that small space which housed a stainless steel sink and toilet combination and a fiberglass frame bed bolted to the floor? Oh, yes, and walled in by bricks that "I'm tired of counting" one of the youngsters said.

We at PBMR would agree that the punishment is severe, but also that it borders on torture, perhaps is unconstitutional—and in no way is restorative. What are our youngsters to learn from hours when nothing is being taught for their betterment? Is it realistic to presume that aloneness and confinement will force them to remember their present misery so they will never again do anything that wrong in the future?

While there may be some truth to that, a sufficient number of the powers that be called for a meeting and invited Fr. Dave Kelly to be present. Ten sat at the table to decide if there couldn't possibly be a better way to handle punishing the nine for their behavior. They wondered if having a circle with the girls might result in a more "restorative" resolution. With the assurance that whatever came out of the circle by way of consensus would be honored by

the staff and administration, plans went forward.

At nine-thirty that following Monday morning the nine girls sat facing the security men whom some of them had attacked, along with other staff, a counselor, a mental health person, and others from administration. Fr. Kelly, Diana, and I with PBMR and Elaine with Community Justice for Youth Institute served as circle keepers in this probing circle. We were hoping to come to a consensus, i.e., all participating would agree on and accept a punishment that would replace the present lock down.

We have always said that the circle can hold strong emotions. Now I can say that I have seen it for myself. It was not only the longest circle—not counting circle training—but also the most intense circle in which I have participated so far. And as minutes ticked by beyond four o'clock in the tiring afternoon I was thinking that this circle is about to fall apart. But it didn't. One girl's plea turned the tide. Apologies came out. Respect ruled. The circle worked. And just before 5:00 P.M. we had come to a consensus.

It is significant that the girls are being offered something much more restorative. It is significant that the administration turned to the method of a circle to come to this resolve, and may be interested in having some staff receive circle training for use of circles more frequently in juvenile justice matters. But, realistically, the road ahead is perhaps the longest and most intense yet. 🙏

Denny Kinderman, C.P.P.S.

Vocations, continued from page 10...

topic was the need for joy, humor and laughter in ministry—the best way to attract others to Christ. He listed reasons for the necessity of humor.

Humor evangelizes. Joy reveals faith. Live your own vocation joyfully. Humor is a good tool for humility. Telling humble stories about yourself deflates a puffed up ego. Humor can shock listeners into reality, can speak truth to authority and can show Christian courage. Humor can deepen our relationship with God and lead us to realize that it's okay to be playful with God. Humor can show hospitality and foster good relationships. Humor is healing. It opens our minds by relaxing us and even helping us to get a point across. Finally, humor is fun and fun is a foretaste of heaven. As a Precious Blood community, are we willing to take time to have fun together and get a taste of heaven?

We are thankful to the community for the opportunity to attend this convocation. As you can tell, it was very beneficial to us, and we are happy to share these highlights with you. 🙏

MY BACK PAGES

Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.

The various writings in this issue speak in different ways to family and connections, the bonds of blood and promise and humanity. We are coming to the close of an annual celebration of family and the ties that bind—for better or worse. Millions of people traveled many miles to be with family and friends. For some, the past weeks have also been a time to feel more acutely the absence of those who once sat at the table and shared life with us.

There is an inevitable romanticizing of family that comes with the end of year holidays. Yet we all know the reality of relationships, and that they play out in the real world which is so distant from cards and movies and seasonal songs.

Coincidentally, I have been reading *Say You're One of Them*, a collection of five stories by Nigerian-born Jesuit priest Uwem Akpan. It is compelling and painful reading, beautiful and devastating at the same time. Each story is set in a different country in Africa and narrated from the perspective of the children who try to remain innocent in a world that is no longer so, even as they find themselves pulled into the horrors of hunger, genocide, sexual exploitation, and grinding poverty.

The opening story, “An Ex-mas Feast,” packs a punch from which it is difficult to recover. Eight-year-old narrator Jigana dreams of going to school while living on the streets of Nairobi, begging on behalf of his parents. The family lives in a makeshift shack. Their twelve-year-old daughter is sent out on the streets to sell her body to provide food. The mother gives the children glue to sniff in order to curb their appetites. In the midst of this awful reality, the family is trying to prepare for Christmas, hoping for a lavish holiday meal.

This is not family life as we usually imagine or experience it. And reading it through the eyes of a child leaves one feeling somewhat brutalized. In the midst of their fight for survival, there is also love and grace and even fleeting humor—making it somehow even more difficult to read. Yet the book is not depressing. The humanity of the characters is powerful and the stories reflect what life is like for many families—and in particular for so many children caught in these nightmares.

We all belong to more than one family. And without exception we are members of the family we call “human.” The above book gets its title from the final story set in the Rwandan civil war of the 90s. As a family seeks to protect itself from the potential brutality, the mother tells her daughter, “When they ask you, say you’re one of them, OK?” “Who?” asks the daughter. “Anybody,” answers her mother. In this case, being one of them could save her life. Being one of something gives each of us life. 🍷

[The story “An Ex-mas Feast” first appeared in *The New Yorker*, and can be found online by googling the title.]

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