



The New Wine Press

Motivated by the spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

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Opening the Windows: *Introduction to 35th Provincial Assembly*

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

“The moment has arrived when we must recognize the signs of the times, seize the opportunity and look far ahead.”

–Pope John XXIII

Those words are attributed to Pope John XXIII on his deathbed. Yesterday, June 3, was the 49th anniversary of his death. I can't help but believe there is a convergence taking place this week as we gather in Assembly to reflect on our charism of renewal in preparation for the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962. As Precious Blood people, we feel a sacred connection with John XXIII because of the visit he made to the Church of Santa Maria in Trivio in Rome where our founder, St. Gaspar, is buried. He went to the tomb of Gaspar on January 4, 1963, five months before he died, to ask our founder's intercession for the success of the Second Vatican Council.

Joseph Truc Vu, Peter Tam Hoang, John Vianney Loi Nguyen (center), stand with Fr. Lac Pham and Fr. Joe Nassal following their Definitive Incorporation.





Fr. Jim Sloan presiding at the Jubilarian Mass during the Assembly.

In preparation for the Council, one of the down-to-earth images often associated with Pope John XXIII to explain his rationale for calling the council was “opening the windows” of the church to the modern world. We have all been in places that were stuffy and cramped, where we couldn’t breathe, and we open a window to let in some outside air. That is precisely what the Second Vatican Council intended to do—to crack open a few windows to let the fresh air of the Spirit into the Church and to be responsive to the “signs of the times.”

One of the images that comes to mind for me is the ushers in the church where I grew up in Bridgeton, MO. St. Mary’s has been gone for some time now—it was closed and torn down during the expansion of St. Louis Lambert Airport. The church was built originally as a gym and used as a church until enough money could be raised to build the church. Of course, that never happened. The church that was torn down was the

original gymnasium connected to the school.

St. Mary’s was not air-conditioned and on those hot and humid St. Louis Sunday summer mornings, I can remember the ushers armed with these long poles going down the aisle and unlocking the latches of the windows to open them and get some air flowing in the stuffy church. Those poles were tricky to use. You had to catch the latch just right, lift up the latch, and then push in and up to open the window. Sometimes the ushers would work through the first part of the Mass trying to open those windows, causing a welcome distraction from a sermon that dulled the senses instead of awakening the heart. But if the breezes became too brisk or winds too strong, the ushers would return to shut the windows.

As we know, the Spirit-wind of Vatican II became too strong for some because it knocked over certain sacred traditions. This was not a gentle breeze, but a wind strong enough to turn around the altar, turn around the priest, and cause us to celebrate Mass in English—or in the language we could understand. Pope John XXIII called it a “New Pentecost.” But in recent years—or so it appears to many of us—there are those who would like to close a few of the windows and tidy up the place that became messy because of the winds of change initiated by the open windows of Vatican II.

Now I know if the air conditioning is on we want to close the windows, or else—in the immortal words of my dad—we would be air conditioning the neighborhood. But in a sense isn’t that what the church is called to do—to open our windows to the world and let the fresh air of the Holy Spirit fill the world with the sweet aromas of resurrection and new life? This is what we are about this week: to “seize the moment” and breathe together for the renewal of the church as we seek

to be faithful to the charism of our founder, St. Gaspar.

A Convergence of Spirit

But there is another convergence happening this week. At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington last Monday, President Barack Obama began a national remembrance of the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Vietnam War that will last 13 years—the length of time of the United States’ involvement in the war. One of those who came to the United States as a boy in 1975 after the fall of Saigon was our own Father Lac Pham. Tomorrow night, Father Lac will preach at our Eucharist as we witness and welcome the Definitive Incorporations of John Loi, Joseph Truc, and Peter Tam. They will join Lac, Dien, and Dominic as Missionaries of the Precious Blood to serve our mission in Vietnam.

Also tomorrow night, many of our Companions will renew their covenants with the community. There is no better sign of the renewal sparked by Vatican II—that emphasized the universal call to holiness and the renewal of our congregation and church—than the presence of our Companions.

And this holy convergence also includes that beginning this summer on August 15, the feast day of the founding of our Congregation, we will begin a three-year preparation for the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 2015. Certainly our commitment to put into action the vision of Vatican II is rooted in our founder’s charism of renewing the church, especially the church leaders who had sold out and compromised during the Roman occupation by Napoleon. Gaspar could not, would not, and did not sell out his conscience, and instead accepted exile and incarceration rather than compromise his values.

It was during this time of exile that Gaspar, through the mentoring of Father Albertini, grew in his understanding and passion for the spirituality of the Precious Blood. The spirituality began to grow deep within his spirit and he began to see it as the means to renew the church and reconcile the world. This vision of our founder, a vision of renewal and reconciliation, is at the heart of the vision of Vatican II. It is a vision that requires us to proclaim the merits found in the blood of Christ, described so eloquently in Pope John XXIII's opening reflection at Vatican II as "the medicine of mercy." As priests, brothers, companions and volunteers, we are, in Gaspar's words, "people of the Spirit" who proclaim with our lives the power of the blood of Christ, a power that has nothing to do with control and everything to do with the cross.

We have seen this proclamation of the blood lived out in the lives of our brothers who will be honored this week. As we do at each of our Assemblies, we will pay tribute to those missionaries among us who

are celebrating significant anniversaries at our Eucharist and Banquet on Wednesday night. This year we are especially blessed to honor Father Larry Cyr, celebrating 75 years of incorporation; Father Vince Hoying, 60 years of incorporation; Fathers Jim Sloan and Paul Sanders on their 50 years of ordination; and Fathers Joe Uecker and Mike Volkmer on their 50 years of incorporation. They have embodied the charism of Gaspar, the spirituality of the blood of Christ, and the renewal of Vatican II.

As we reflect on this convergence of the rebirth of the church 50 years ago this year and recall the death of John XXIII 49 years ago yesterday, his deathbed message which I quoted at the beginning is a clarion call to keep the council alive and well in the hearts of all people. To deepen our understanding of the council and to facilitate our time together this week in renewing our commitment to the vision of Vatican II, we are privileged to have with us Bill Huebsch. Through his books, his pastoral resources, his presentations and workshops throughout the country and the

Liberty Companions following the Covenanting Ceremony during the Assembly.



The New Wine Press

Missionaries of the Precious Blood
Kansas City Province
www.kcprovince.org

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

The Kansas City Province—incorporated members, covenanted companions, and candidates—united in prayer, service and mutual support, characterized by the tradition of its American predecessors, are missionaries of these times with diverse gifts and ministries.

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

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

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

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

Layout & Design
Margaret Haik
mhaik.pbc@gmail.com

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world, I don't know of anyone who has done more to keep the vision of Vatican II alive and make it known to people in the pew and beyond.

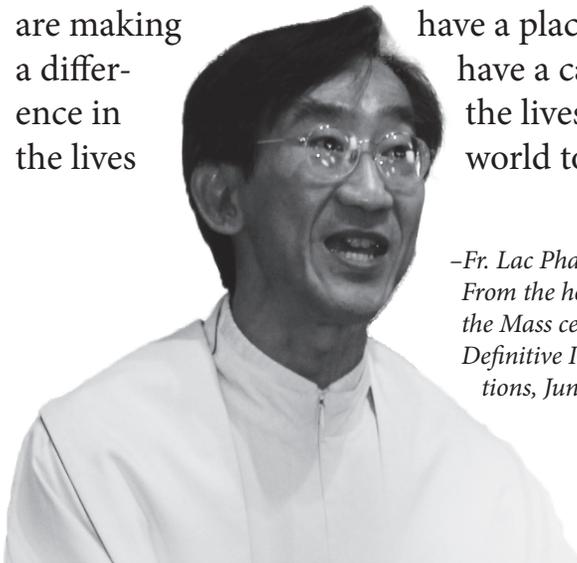
As we gather this week to refresh our hearts, renew our relationships, and rekindle our charism, may we embrace our mission to be people of the Spirit, fueled by God's grace, on fire with Gaspar's vision, who are ready and willing to open the windows to the world and renew the Church and refresh the face of the earth.



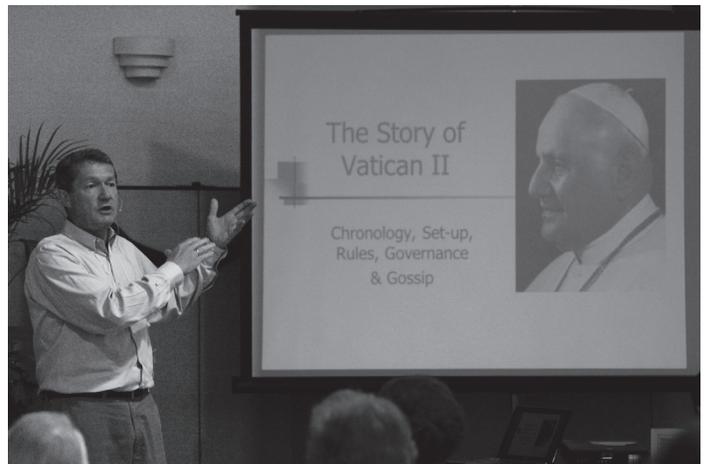
Marie Trout congratulates Companion Lucy Reznicek at the Covenanting Ceremony, June 5, 2012. Fr. Denny Kinderman, Fr. Joe Nassal and Rollie Reznicek are also pictured.

“We are not as numerous as other congregations and religious orders; we are not as big in numbers as some other movements in the church; but we are making a difference in the lives

of many people, scattered throughout the world. And we can see tonight at least half of the globe, all the way from South-east Asia to North America. So we have a place, we have a calling in the lives of the world today.”



—Fr. Lac Pham, C.P.P.S.
From the homily at the Mass celebrating Definitive Incorporations, June 5, 2012.



Above: Bill Huebsch, founder of The Vatican II Project, was the presenter during the Assembly. Bill's work can be found at Twenty-third Publications: <http://store.pastoralplanning.com/mebiu.html>.

Below: Fr. Al Ebach congratulates Jesse Carroll on receiving one of the Precious Blood Scholarships.



Mark your calendars now:

2013 Assembly
June 3-5, 2013

Church of the Annunciation
Kearney, Missouri



Jubilarians Fr. Mike Volkmer, Fr. Vince Hoying, Fr. Jim Sloan, Fr. Paul Sanders, and Fr. Joe Uecker, June 6, 2012.

Thoughts on Anniversaries and the Work of the Precious Blood

by Fr. Paul Sanders, C.P.P.S.

[The following is excerpted from Fr. Paul Sanders' homily given at the Jubilee Mass during the annual Assembly on June 6, 2012.]

“Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever. This is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice.” The psalmist tonight expresses well our thoughts and prayers during this Assembly. This day is the culmination of our celebrating community, and it is a Jubilee Mass for all of us.

Some of us get special mention because our years in the community are divisible by fives and tens. Where this comes from, I do not know—maybe from the ancient Romans or Arabs. If we were more biblical, we would go with sevens and forties and multiples thereof.

So what are these years? God gives us a span of time and expects us to get his work done in our allotted time. Some of us need more time than others.

And so we look at different anniversaries. We congratulate Fr. Mark Yates. This is his four-week anniversary as a priest. We also congratulate our three newly incorporated members and our newest covenanted companion from last night. They are all celebrating their first 24 hours.

There are other anniversaries in the news this year. The Golden Gate Bridge celebrates 75 years. How a bridge celebrates, I do not know; you will have to ask those who live out there. Queen Elizabeth of England celebrates her 60th anniversary as monarch as she floats up and down the Thames with lots of followers. This is the 50th year since Continental Airlines Flight 11 blew up over the Missouri/Iowa border. Parts of the plane landed near the town of Cincinnati, IA where Fr. Joe Anthamatten had a mission. Some people are still hurting from this. This past Monday was the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Midway, which

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Companion Kathy Keary is the Director of Adult Faith Formation at the Church of the Annunciation in Kearney, MO.

Just Grow, Just Change, Just Amazing, JustFaith

by Kathy Keary

When I examine my JustFaith roots, I am brought to February 2, 2002, the day that my daughter and I lost our home in a fire. Within moments, I had a strong sense that I was embarking on a spiritual journey filled with the wonders of God. To say that the event resulted in challenges would be a significant understatement, as would my testimony that it was also a highly transformative experience.

Soon after this incident, I was watching the news in our temporary housing, a very nice apartment in south Johnson County compliments of State Farm. The program featured a single dad who was living in a school with his two sons after a disaster took their home. My heart went out to him in a more profound way than it would have prior to my experience. I compared my surroundings with his and realized how blessed I was. It triggered something deep within. I felt compelled to reach out to others who found themselves struggling with homelessness. Within a couple of months of our loss, my daughter and I began volunteering at a Catholic Worker House and bringing meals and supplies to people living on the streets through Project Uplift. Finding the face of Christ in

those we served was life changing.

Once I became involved face to face with people living in poverty, I had a gripping desire to do more to address their plight, but I was clueless as to what I could do that would bring lasting change. I was then invited to join a JustFaith group in a neighboring parish. The focus of JustFaith is not only direct service, but also bringing about justice through education and advocacy. It opened my eyes to the nightmare of global poverty. I was horrified to learn that 40,000 people die each day of hunger—and 32,000 of them are children. I was shocked to learn that 1.1 billion people—1/6 of the world's population—live in extreme poverty living on less than \$1 per day. Another 2.7 billion people struggle to survive on less than \$2 per day. At that time, there were 36,000,000 people in the United States living below the poverty line, with 12.9 million of them being children. I know these figures have sky rocketed since our domestic economic down turn. Undoubtedly, our God is a God of abundance. It became very clear that the distribution of his blessings benefited some at the expense of many.

JustFaith opened my eyes and heart to the many injustices that permeate

our world. My initial reaction was to be overwhelmed, questioning how I could possibly impact this huge nightmare. JustFaith includes a discernment process, so before its conclusion, I recognized the piece to which God was calling me. This included bringing JustFaith to my own parish, as well as a ministry that serves families challenged by homelessness. JustFaith has become a big part of who I am and continues to have a huge impact on the choices I make. It has given me the courage to make life style changes and re-direct my life pursuant to God's call. Many doors have opened, and God has filled me with the grace to enter them. It has been a life-giving journey. I feel so blessed that God led me down this path and continues to direct me in ways that allow me to live out gospel values in community with others.

My JustFaith journey began with a workshop led by Jack Jezreel, a dynamic speaker and the founder of JustFaith. JustFaith Ministries strives to live out their mission to “form, inform, and transform people of faith by offering programs and resources that sustain them in their compassionate commitment to build a more just and peaceful world.” Jack Jezreel's workshop is an excellent opportunity for those interested in learning new ways to live out their faith in a manner consistent with the message of Jesus. Jack's message is such that one cannot hear it and not be moved to respond to the cry of the blood.

Scripture calls us to be compassionate as our God is compassionate. JustFaith assists us in recognizing what the compassion of Christ looks like in our world today. It is a life-changing spiritual awakening into compassion. This organization partners with Bread for the World, Catholic Campaign for Human Development, and Catholic Relief Services and is supported by Catholic Charities USA. JustFaith

has been used in over 1,000 churches and has more than 20,000 graduates across the country.

Members of the Precious Blood Justice and Peace Committee are hopeful that JustFaith groups will form this fall among members and companions and within communities with Precious Blood presence. The workshop will be a wonderful opportunity for you to see if this program is a good fit for you. It also stands alone as a highly inspirational gathering that is rooted in Scripture and calls each of us to be about building God's kingdom in the here and now. I hope to see you there!



All are invited to
Transforming Hearts
for Justice Workshop
presented by Jack Jezreel

Church of the Annunciation
Kearney, MO
Saturday, August 18
9 a.m. to noon

Advanced registration:
Send \$10 to (write "JustFaith"
in the memo line and provide
the names of attendees):
Church of the Annunciation
attn: Kathy Keary
PO Box 599
Kearney, MO 64060

Registration at the door: \$20.
Clergy are free;
please register at
kkeary@annunciation.com.

Questions can be directed to
that email address as well, or
by calling 816.628.5030.

Commentary: *Is Bullying Only a Child's Problem?*

Fr. Mark Miller, C.P.P.S., Pastor of Catholic Community of Pettis County

I am sure we have all heard of how some students are "bullied" at school as well as on the Internet. In fact, there are cases where young people have committed suicide because they could no longer live with being "bullied" by their peers. If we have never been "bullied," this may seem rather rare, but statistics prove to us that it is more common than what we might expect.

We recognize that "bullying" is an expression of power or of domination over another, either because the other is physically weak or psychologically unpopular. We also have heard that from time to time the president uses his so-called "bully pulpit" to get a message across. Here it is referring to the fact that the president has greater access to the media and therefore can publicize his message rather quickly by using the "forum" provided to him because of his office. Sometimes this is used as a sign of power and influence over those who fall under his jurisdiction.

Recently I was made aware of another form of "bullying." In this case, it involved the parents of the groom who were at odds with some of the invited guests of the bride. They simply informed the mother of the bride that if these people came to the wedding, they would not be present and it would be her

fault for their missing their son's wedding day. Again, placing blame on a person who is not responsible for their feeling of estrangement is an expression of power or of domination.

How do we interpret what is happening to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious? When the Vatican simply "takes over" the leadership and direction of an organization within the Catholic Church without any dialogue or consultation, could this be classified as "ecclesiastical bullying"? It certainly is an expression of power and of domination. In this case, it is being justified by saying that the organization is not being authentic to Catholic principles. But the process that is being used is certainly less than what would be desired. We say we embrace human rights, of which respect for the person is paramount. How is respect shown in this case, when the message is "I will take control of your life?"

What is the proper response to any form of "bullying," whether on the school playground, or in politics, or among estranged families or within the Church itself? Is the use of power or domination ever really acceptable when it is directed specifically against another human being? I offer these thoughts for your own consideration and prayer.

STICKS
and
STONES



The Mission House: A Model for Modern Missionaries

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

Living together in mission houses they were a source of continual renewal for the priests and the people, mainly by preaching missions and retreats. In this nucleus, the Society of the Precious Blood had its origin, and from it derives its spirit.

(C.P.P.S. Normative Texts, C1)

In May, Sonnino Mission House in Berkeley offered a day of prayer for those who minister with the poor. Many of those attending work primarily with the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the bay area. Reflecting on the day, one of the women gave the house a great affirmation when she said she sensed a sacredness about Sonnino that is palpable. “I can feel it,” she said. “As I walked through the house, I was struck by the simplicity and lack of clutter.”

We hope that all the places where Precious Blood people live, work, pray and play are places where those who visit sense it is holy ground. But our founder St. Gaspar had a very clear idea about the mission house and how Missionaries of the Precious Blood are to establish these houses for the renewal of the church and reconciliation among peoples. In light of our recent Assembly, when we were inspired to keep the vision of Vatican II alive, I see Precious Blood Center as the central mission house for our province that incarnates the vision of St. Gaspar for the local church and community.

According to the late Precious Blood Father John Klopke, who did extensive research on our founder’s letters, the “mission house may be St. Gaspar’s unique contribution to the history of religious life.” In Gaspar’s view, the mission house was not only a residence where missionaries lived in community, but a place of ministry. Each mission house became a kind of spirituality or renewal center for the local area. While the members maintained private space for themselves, they opened the doors of their houses to others to offer safe and sacred space for people to grow in their faith.

Gaspar saw “the mission house was more like a center for spirituality for both priests and laity to share in the spirituality of the missions,” according to Father Klopke. In his letters, Gaspar often refers to the mission house as a place for ongoing formation and renewal that “are open to all.” Gaspar advised designating a section of each house “for the making of retreats. There, many of the clergy as well as laity can withdraw from time to time to pursue that knowledge which is the knowledge of the saints.”

Fr. Klopke points out that Gaspar envisioned mission houses to be places where the “communication of ideas” was a key component. Gaspar encouraged ongoing study by the missionaries and dialogue about the important issues of the day affecting both the church and the culture. In his presentations at the Assembly, Bill Huebsch emphasized the importance of conversion in the understanding and implementation of the vision of the Second Vatican Council. One cannot force a conversion experience, of course, but what we can do is establish safe and sacred environments where people can reflect, pray, and dialogue about matters of the soul.

In distinguishing his vision of the mission house from other retreat and renewal centers established by various religious communities in his day, Gaspar wrote, “While other institutes...have as their primary objective the education of youth, our Mission and Retreat Houses offer whatever is necessary to bring about, with the greatest possible rapidity, the conversion of souls.”

While I do not see Precious Blood Center as a retreat house per se, I certainly envision it as a center for renewal and reconciliation. In reviewing Gaspar’s letters outlining the vision of the mission house, Klopke suggests that education and evangelization were key goals for the mission house community. “The mission house is ‘open’ in two senses,” Klopke wrote. “It does not restrict its functioning and influence to a specific group or social level; nor does it aim at less than total evangelization in order to present to the institutional church a people prepared for witness, dare one say for ministry?”

Precious Blood Center can be a place where the vision of Vatican II, the universal call to holiness, and the priesthood of all peoples can be embraced, encouraged,

Participants of the Caregiver Retreat held at Sonnino House, May 2012.



and enlarged; a place where adult faith formation can help prepare lay ministers for service in the church and the world; a place where those who are working tirelessly in the fields of faith can come and rest awhile; a place where people find not only rest for their souls but the tools they need to continue to cultivate the kingdom of God in the world today. Since the close of the Center for Pastoral Ministry in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, there is a need in the local church for places for adult faith formation, renewal, and dialogue.

Gaspar took a special interest in offering what he called a “safe haven” for the diocesan clergy. “In a word,” Klopke wrote, “Gaspar expects that—with the exception of those clergy whose assignment requires residence—the ideal of the mission house will be so attractive that all other clergy will become zealous participants in the Work! Moreover, in the process, they will not only become sanctified but also educated!” This past February, we hosted listening circles at the Center for diocesan and religious priests affording them a safe place to pray and dialogue about the events unfolding in the local church.

The mission house is a place where we open our doors and our hearts to those in the mainstream of ministry in the church as well as those on the margins. For those who have been rejected, forsaken or forgotten by the institution, families, or faith communities, we offer a space for them to discover again their true self, their best self, their God self, while reconnecting with the community. The mission house is a ministry of hospitality which, as Henry Nouwen wrote in *Reaching Out*, “means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place.”

In August, the worldwide Precious Blood community embarks on a three-year period of study, prayer, and planning to celebrate the 200th anniversary of our founding on August 15, 2015. This first year we are invited to reflect on our historical roots. As Father Klopke wrote, “Gaspar conceived the mission house...as an invitation to enter fully into the work motivated by the spirituality.” As we gather in districts and regions, in our mission houses and companion groups this coming year, I encourage all of us to study, reflect, pray, and dialogue about how each of our places of ministry and community can more faithfully reflect Gaspar’s vision of the mission house.

And what better way to honor our history than to make St. Gaspar’s main contribution to religious life, the mission house, a reality at Precious Blood Center.

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turned the tide of World War II in the Pacific. Some of us are old enough to remember it! And of course, this year marks the 50th anniversary of the opening of Vatican Council II. After these several days with Bill Huebsch, it will be more engrained in our memories.

Regardless of how many years we have served, we are all one, united by the Blood of Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit to carry the message of the gospel. Missionaries—each on of us. So it is our job to bring the good news.

St. Gaspar expressed a desire to have 1000 tongues to proclaim the glory of the Precious Blood. Why don't we



Fr. Paul Sanders and Teresa Ruiz of Sacred Heart-Guadalupe Parish at the Jubliarian Banquet, June 6, 2012.

fulfill that wish. We have over 200 members and companions in our province. Suppose each of us makes better the lives of five people. Five people who—because of us and without us realizing it—reflect some aspect of Precious Blood spirituality. There we have the thousand tongues.

Perhaps you think to yourself, “My Precious Blood spirituality isn't that strong.” Don't worry, it is

there. That is how the providence of God directed you to be here. Imbibing and living Precious Blood spirituality is a lifetime process. Learning and understanding what the Blood of Jesus does in our lives is never fully understood by us. And therein lies its beauty. It is God who works in and through us. We are God's instruments.

You don't have to preach. We make changes by how we live. Actions speak louder than words. St. Francis of Assisi said, “Preach the gospel always. If necessary, use words.”

We will never know when we have reached our five people. That is not necessary. We keep plodding along. We don't even have to think about the Blood of Jesus—but it is what keeps us going when we do good.

We are missionaries. We are sent. No one calls us back and says stop. We keep going. The Energizer Bunny has nothing on us. We just go and go and go.

Congratulations, Fr. Mark!

The Precious Blood Community gathered at St. Francis Xavier Church in St. Joseph, MO on May 5th to celebrate the ordination of Fr. Mark Yates, C.P.P.S. The Most Rev. Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S., bishop emeritus of the Des Moines Diocese presided with nineteen Missionaries of the Precious Blood concelebrating. Joining the members, companions, and parishioners in celebration were Fr. Mark's parents, William and Maxine Yates. His brother and sister, Brad Yates and Susan Yates, took part in the service, presented the gifts of bread and wine.



The New Creation: Reflections from the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation *Power of Symbols and Ritual*

Fr. Dave Kelly, C.P.P.S., *Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation*

“In our hurried world...we have lost a bit of the power of storytelling and ritual. The evening meal of family is often replaced by fast food or do-it-yourself take out. We gather in our meetings intent on efficiency and getting to the task at hand...in the world of reconciliation, the task at hand is hospitality and storytelling. Our stories unfold and our journey is marked by the relationships that are forged.”

A few months back there was a memorial at Daley Plaza to those who have died from gun violence in Chicago. It was a take-off of the memorial that has been done for our men and women who have died on the battlefield. The shoes of those who were killed violently on the streets of Chicago were placed neatly on the plaza during the night, so that when the throngs of people who would descend on Daley Plaza arrived, they were met with this sea of shoes spread across the plaza area; each pair of shoes had next to them a photo and the name of the person who had been killed.

The stark image of children, teen, and adult shoes was powerful. Hundreds of shoes lined the plaza: there were the ninja turtle shoes of a toddler, the boots of a man, the gym shoes of a teen, the sandals of a young girl and hundreds more. Each pair of shoes carried a story—even more personalized by a photo and name of the child, teen or adult.

People walked away touched by the stories that the shoes evoked. People commented as they walked away that they felt they needed to respond in some way— even if it was to say a short prayer, shed a tear, or vow to reach out to a loved one.

At the very heart of the work we do here at the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation is meeting one another in our stories. We embrace one another in the power and humility of our stories.

Sr. Donna Liete and volunteer Sara Nunez gather each month with mothers who have a child incarcerated. They gather in circle and then share a lunch together. This past Saturday I was invited to have lunch with them. The ritual of that meal, simply and yet carefully prepared, became the altar of the stories shared between moments of laughter and tears. The meal of cold cuts, potato salad, and cookies, with brightly folded napkins, flowers, and a tablecloth adorned with a centerpiece, all spoke of the respect and honor hospitality.

In our hurried world, I am afraid we have lost a bit of the power of storytelling and ritual. The evening meal of family is often replaced by fast food or do-it-yourself take out. We gather in our meetings intent on efficiency and getting to the task at hand—time is of the essence. But in the world of reconciliation, the task at hand is hospitality and storytelling. Our stories unfold and our journey is marked by the relationships that are forged.

A mother who lost her two sons to violence in the span of two months cannot be hurried on her path to healing. There is nothing efficient or timely about her need to sit and honor her sons through storytelling and ritual. If there is a task at hand, then it is the task of setting the tables of conversation and hospitality. What she needs is to be connected to a community of hope where she and the stories that she carries are honored and respected. I have been told too many times that the monthly circle is the only place where they feel their stories are welcomed and honored. Even their own families tell them that they need to get on with their lives—letting go of their story.

Stories have power. Through the re-telling of the event, we are remembered and re-connected to one another and to our self. Storytelling allows us to move to a new place and, with the grace of God, become a new creation.

The work of reconciliation is not easy nor is it ever really complete. We continually invite people around the table and together grow into the new creation of God.

Precious Blood Center
P.O. Box 339
Liberty MO 64069-0339
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In Remembrance: *Companion Mary Wagner*



Companion Mary Catherine Wagner of Butternut, WI, died on May 4, 2012. The following is excerpted from the homily preached by Companion/Deacon Bob Schienebeck at the Mass of Christian Burial for on May 9.

Mary was one of those people with a huge heart who had room for everyone. She was a true disciple, one that God gave us, one who understood what the Beatitudes really mean.

There is of course a sense of loss, a feeling that there is unfinished business, that she was just getting started, that she was on a roll. That is because she was also a teacher, and once a teacher always at teacher. She spent most of her life teaching. Those who knew Mary, knew that her life of teaching was not a career, not a job, but rather a calling. And she continued that calling, that teaching, into her retirement years.

Mary was also a covenanted Companion of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. There are number of other covenanted Companions here this morning honoring Mary. For our local group of Companions of the Precious Blood, Mary was our teacher, our leader, our convener. She was always so organized, and had props, prayers, handouts, topics, discussions, and above all a “mission for us to carry out as Companions of the Precious Blood.

The sacraments were treasures for her daily living; I visited Mary in

her last days, brought her the Eucharist, we talked, I gave her a blessing. Although I could tell how weak she was, she wanted me to get her an absentee ballot, so she could vote. That was Mary.

She was organized, she was thorough, and she would be the last to leave as she tidied up loose ends, getting all those notes out of what was probably one of the biggest purses ever made. I often think of her husband Bill—especially when I get a little impatient and how he would patiently wait for Mary. I remember times we would be leaving, and we would see Bill in the car, patiently waiting for Mary. Bill has been patiently waiting for Mary for almost six years, and now his waiting is over. Mary has joined him.

We believe that death is not an end, but a beginning. Mary has passed through death, from this present, temporary life to a perfect, permanent life. She has become one of those saints, who have now gone before us.