



The New Wine Press

Motivated by the Spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

Volume 22 No. 10
June 2013



Drops of Love
page 4

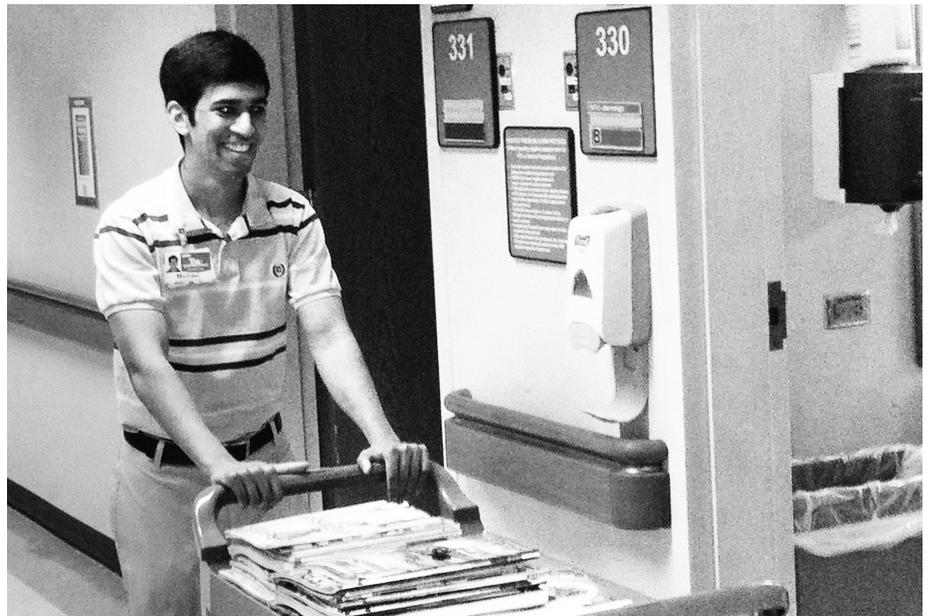
Preaching to Vampires 3
page 6

Sacred Confusion
page 7

Gun Violence
page 8

Juvenile Justice Week
page 10

Incorporated,
Covenanted, Committed
page 12



Looking Back: My Time As a Precious Blood Volunteer

Michael D'Netto, Precious Blood Volunteer

As a volunteer during these past nine months, I have had the privilege of living at Gaspar Mission House, my Kansas City home. Here, Fathers Al, Garry and Dick welcomed me as a member of the house from the night I moved in last fall. This foundation has been there for me through everything I have done, from gathering for dinner to inviting me into their respective parishes to taking me to the airport on many occasions and so much more. I have also been welcomed by the local companions group, which has met at Gaspar Mission House throughout the year. This community lives the Precious Blood mission by valuing the image of Christ in all people, focusing on helping those who don't enjoy full participation in society.

My work fit into the Precious Blood mission by caring for sick and, in many cases, impoverished members of the Kansas City community. I assisted operations at Truman Medical Center in many ways as a full time volunteer, with a focus on assisting in and improving patients' hospital experiences. While doctors do not have the time to get to know patients well, I do. Furthermore, I have the additional benefit of time to personally connect with patients.

continued on next page

In one instance a few weeks ago, I was surprised by a patient's question. A long time had passed since a patient surprised me, because I felt like I had heard or seen just about everything at this point in my volunteering. I had met this patient a few months ago when she was first brought to the hospital, and many diagnostic tests were being run to find out what had been causing her symptoms. This time around, she was going through her first round of chemotherapy, as her medical team recently determined she had cancer. She inquired, "Why is it that in the time I have been here, the only person I have seen every day is you?"

I wondered why this was the case. In the morning the medical students see their patients, and the entire medical team makes its rounds later in the day. Since this happens every day, along with many other daily tasks, I was not sure why I was the only person who saw her so regularly. Before I responded, she said "Thank you for coming in every day; it's nice to see a familiar face." Considering how little time I spent in her room, I was



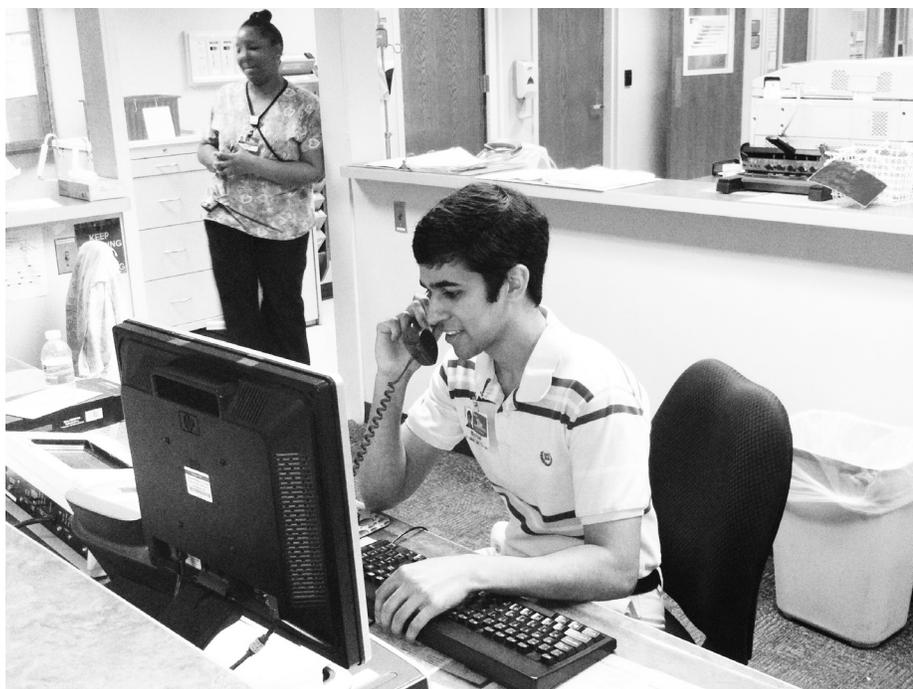
honestly surprised that she remembered me, let alone that she realized I had stopped by each day. Despite her tough cancer diagnosis and treatment, she willingly offered me a genuine message of gratitude for simply stopping by her room. This comment meant very much to me, and is a memory that will stay with me.

In the aforementioned example and so many others, patients and staff members at TMC were true blessings for me. Patients were so grateful for the little I offered, and I became close with some of the frequent Truman patients who wished me well, asked me to stop by later to continue our conversations, or to keep them in my prayers. The staff members were great role models in patient-centered care. I am fortunate to have been surrounded by many caring and supportive people at Truman. This support was especially nice as I encountered difficulties with some patients.

While in many cases patients at Truman were a blessing, they also posed challenges. Some patients were understandably irritated during their hospital stay, which made interacting with them difficult. For instance, when answering a patient's call light as I had done countless times previously, the patient began yelling over the phone for seemingly no reason. I continued to speak with this patient in a calm manner as I did with every other patient. In this small way I tried to put the patient at ease. This felt especially important, as something was clearly weighing on this patient, and I did not need to add to the patient's stress level. The nurse later told me this patient had mental issues for most of her life and despite our best efforts, our work may not be appreciated or noticed.

I have become comfortable entering patients' rooms and speaking with all types of people. I met people of so many backgrounds, ages and reasons for coming to Truman. Nevertheless, no matter how different people may seem, we are all very similar in that everyone wants to feel respected and heard. For this reason, I gave my best effort to treat all patients with respect, no matter how it seemed to be perceived. For example, the man going through his final course of chemotherapy and the lady who hadn't realized how much she liked the companionship of a dog are both happy to speak with someone about their interests in life. I had the benefit of time as a volunteer, able to converse with and develop relationships with patients who were unfortunately in the hospital for a long time or frequently returned to Truman.

This year in which healthcare-based service has been my main priority has given me a great understanding of



the communication and teamwork necessary to care for each patient, and has reaffirmed my decision to enter medical school. I am eager to continue caring for patients and building the knowledge base necessary to practice medicine. I look forward to a career in medicine, and am excited to put all my effort into becoming the best physician I can be.

Just as Jesus shed his blood not for a select few but for all, Precious Blood spirituality requires one to promote an environment of respect and care for all people. For me as a volunteer, this meant putting patients' best interests first, either following through on patient requests or explaining to patients why I could not bring what they asked for. Beyond volunteering, Precious Blood spirituality has motivated and will motivate me to continue to respect and care for each person, as we are all equal in the eyes of God. This sense of equality for all people is clearly evident in my discussions with Precious Blood companions, a group into which I have been graciously welcomed. The companions I have met form a motivated group which helps each other to focus their efforts on furthering Precious Blood spirituality. Although I am physically leaving the companions group soon, the Precious Blood work and mission will stay with me. With Jesus' communion and compassion as the ideal, my Precious Blood experience will assist me in putting forth my best effort to care for every person in all I do.

Michael D'Netto will finish his Precious Blood volunteering in June 2013. He plans to attend University of Toledo College of Medicine this fall.

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

Printed on recycled paper by
McDonald Business Forms
Overland Park, KS



Drops of Love

Fr. Gaspar Baraka, C.P.P.S.

The term drop can be defined in different ways, but I will give the meaning of this term as “a very small amount of liquid that forms a round shape.” Rain and blood are two examples. Stated simply, a drop is a small quantity of liquid.

Blood is the red liquid that flows through the bodies of humans and animals. It is essential for the existence of both. The author of Leviticus states that “blood is life” (Lev. 17:11). Our Lord Jesus Christ showed his love for us by pouring out his Blood. If the blood is both life and love, then our spirituality of the Precious Blood means the spirituality of life and love. If we hold the Cup of the New Covenant filled with drops of Blood, it means we hold both life and love in our hands—both important for our existence. The spirituality of the Precious Blood invites us to carry the cup filled with life and love and then to give it to the people who need it the most.

If we talk of the Blood of Our Lord, surely we also talk of the Love of Our Lord for us. Consider the drops

of Love during the Agony of our Lord in the Garden of Olives: “In his anguish he prayed even more earnestly, and sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood” (Lk 22:44). Drops of love from the face of our redeemer fell to the ground. The Son of God was ready to lose life for our salvation and to share the love of God with us.

Think of the Drops of Love on the way to Golgotha, as it is written, “Jesus was led away, and carrying the cross by himself, went out to what is called the place of the skull” (Jn 19:16). Jesus poured out the drops of life and love on the way in order to clear the way to Golgotha for the faithful and his disciples. Drops of love were the mark for those who wanted to follow and to see the Crucifixion of their King. They were looking for the Drops of Love at the place of the Skull. No one would lose the way, because it had been animated and decorated by the Blood of Christ, which is life and love. We are called to share the Drops of Love and Life in order that no one lose the way to heaven.

The modern Golgotha is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, where a few drops of wine mixed with a bit of water become the blood of Christ for our redemption. In sharing the Cup filled with the Blood of Christ, we become part and parcel with Christ. The Blood of Christ flows through our veins in order for us to attain eternal life. In sharing the same Cup of Blood of Christ, we are called to share not only life but also love through passion, death and resurrection with Christ.

We are nourished from the cup of suffering, hope and love. Filled with Blood of Christ, through the same cup we become agents of hope in a suffering world through the so-called “Sharing the Drop of Love.” It is the Cup which is a well-spring for the spirituality of the Blood of Christ, the spirituality which calls us not only to clarify our identities as baptized Missionaries and Adorers of the Blood of Christ, but also to show the marks of the Drops of Love of Christ poured out for many, from the garden of Olives all the way to Golgotha. Jesus said; “For this is my blood, the blood of the Covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:28).

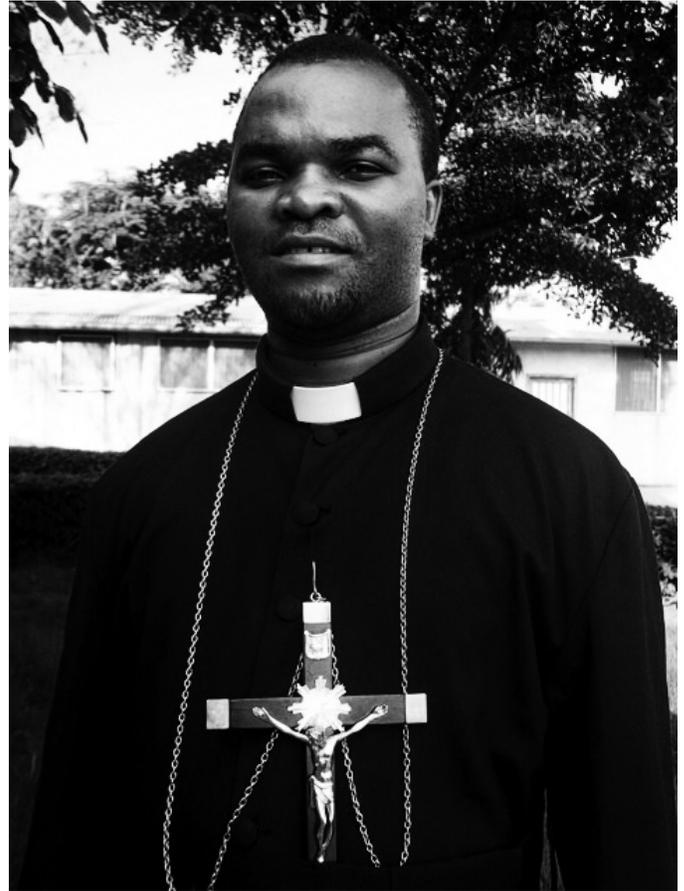
Drops of Blood of Christ on the way to Golgotha invite us to be always in motion. Not only as the baptized, but in a special way Missionaries of the Precious Blood are permanently on the way to Golgotha like Jesus, because the Cry of the Blood demands mobility not only in the heart but also externally. A missionary who holds the spirituality of life and love must live in the so called “pilgrims tent,” because the pilgrim’s tent demands a great availability in order to be uprooted and journey forward in response to the call of the Blood—until the last drops of Blood on the Cross shed for the life and love of others: “One of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water” (Jn. 19:34).

Drops of Blood are a catalyst for sharing the mission of Jesus as collaborators in God’s great project of favor to humanity and redemption. The participants should proclaim the motto of our Jubilee—“Sharing The Drop of Love”—by words and deeds. The project seeks to widen the heart of all so that no one is excluded from the Kingdom of God, full of love. Through the Blood of Christ, we must feel joy and happiness for having been called, to collaborate in this project of building God’s reign filled with peace, hope, solidarity and equality.

Sharing the Drop of Love of Christ calls us to put our lives where there are signs of injustice and death; to announce a future for those who are marginalized, those for whom the world has denied a future; and to give witness to compassion and solidarity—built upon the foundation

of drops of the Blood of Christ filling in the Cup of Love.

Missionaries of the Precious Blood are called to spread the spirituality of Life and Love, wherever there is lack of life, because blood is life. When you hold the cup filled with the Blood of Christ it means you hold the life of Christ, which invites you share it with others.



Fr. Gaspar Baraka, C.P.P.S. is a member of the Tanzania Vicariate. “Sharing the Drop of Love” is the theme that the Missionaries there have chosen for their observance of the 200th anniversary of the Community’s founding.

Preaching to Vampires 3

Fr. Keith Branson, C.P.P.S., Chaplain at Avila University

Anne Rice's *Queen of the Damned* comes to an interesting crisis point: an ancient vampire named Akasha, co-creator of the vampire race and generator of almost every religion myth of the Divine Female, has awakened from a long meditation with the cure for the problems with the human race. She will destroy all human culture and 90% of all males to shift the balance of power to women, which will banish injustice from the world and create lasting peace. Her chosen consort, Lestat, is shocked and appalled by her ruthless goal, saying they have no right to impose a future on the human race and protests: "We're things that never should have come into existence." Her reply is telling: "It doesn't matter now. You fail to grasp how little anything matters. I give you no sublime reasons for what I do because the reasons are simple and practical; how we came into being is irrelevant. What matter is that we have survived. Don't you see? That is the utter beauty of it, the beauty our of which all other beauties will be born, that we have survived."

The vampire's ultimate motivation is Power. Vampires have few laws, and always seem to work around them when they feel like it. Vampire leaders can always be challenged, and winning the fight determines who's right. Vampires always make the terms of their existence as far as possible be laws unto themselves, set their own core values. Even good vampires act from personal loyalty and strength, and can only live up to their high standards because they can protect themselves. To fully accept being a vampire means giving up humanity, and starting over with a new set of values.

This reminded me of Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the *übermensch*, the superior human who creates the totally new set of values. This comes out particularly in *Queen of the Damned*, but I think it lingers in the other works: the struggle of strong individuals to impose their will on their realities. The *übermensch* arises in the world after the Death of God, the devaluation of Divinity as source of useful human values. Nietzsche announced the *übermensch* as a goal humanity can set for itself, as opposed to a life of conformity, complacency and personal comfort without ambition.

I don't think it's a stretch to say we are living in a culture that openly accepts the Death of God, and almost everyone strives to create new values by themselves. In

the vampire novels I've read, religion has no positive role whatsoever, and every church scene caricatures religion as a negative image of superstition and intolerance. There are vampires motivated by a sanctity of human life: Lestat tries to prey solely upon people he judges as evil, and Carlisle Cullen of *Twilight*, the son of a Puritan clergyman of the 16th century, is a "vegetarian" vampire who only drinks animal blood. The only positive religious character of any kind I've found is Sookie Stackhouse from *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, and she seems to use faith only as a comforter, and her Christianity troubles her when she's guilty of taking life.

Proclaiming the Gospel of Christ's Blood effectively means stripping away the negative images of religion and contesting the Death of God. As much as we may feel we are living in a moral vacuum, a self-righteous response is another cover for the *übermensch*, since it proclaims Truth based on personal achievement and survival. Looking for heroes other than Christ is dangerous, and opens the door to the misuses of power that have cost every church authority and credibility. Christian values are important because they're in everyone's best interest.

By extension, the concept of servant leadership, of a leader totally committed to the good of all, also seems to be an alien concept. The abuse scandals of our Church haven't helped that perception, regardless how we evaluate our current leadership. One challenge is to hold up the model of Christ's leadership as an attainable goal, a goal worth devoting real time and effort pursuing. It's longed for—and almost never found today.

Discerning the signs of the times can be frightening, especially when it seems we're a long way from people we're trying to reach. Learning the new language is important, because the hunger for purpose of life and community, the desire for the Sacred, is in every generation, whether it's awake or not. Our challenge as missionaries is to learn the new language, and go where our new people are.

Sacred Confusion

Fr. Bill Nordenbrock, C.P.P.S.

When I think back over my life, it seems that I have lived most of it in the state of confusion. While I am annoyed by confusion as much as the next person (maybe more so), in hindsight I can see that it has been an important, formative part of my life. Like ancestors that wandered 40 years in the desert to arrive at the Promised Land, it was only through struggling with questions, uncertainties and confusion that I have been able to arrive at moments of grace and growth.

Confusion annoys me. My Teutonic DNA predisposes me to long for certainty and answers and order. A willingness to leave the comfortable home of sure answers and to venture into the world of uncertainty and ambiguity is a missionary journey, and I have tried to live a missionary life.

To “meditate on the great mysteries of our faith” sounds like nice, pious advice coming from a spiritual director, but it certainly feels like wallowing in confusion. Do you share my confusion when you read a theologian who writes that he thinks that “Eucharist” is more a verb than a noun? What? And do I really want to ponder this mystery? And yet, if I don’t control my desire to avoid the disturbing confusion that is a part of engaging the ‘big’ questions, how do I open the door to my spiritual growth and development? The grace of an intimate understanding of Eucharist as more than something I receive and more than something that I do at the altar, to Eucharist as a part of who I am, can only be received if I am willing to be uncomfortably challenged by Mystery.

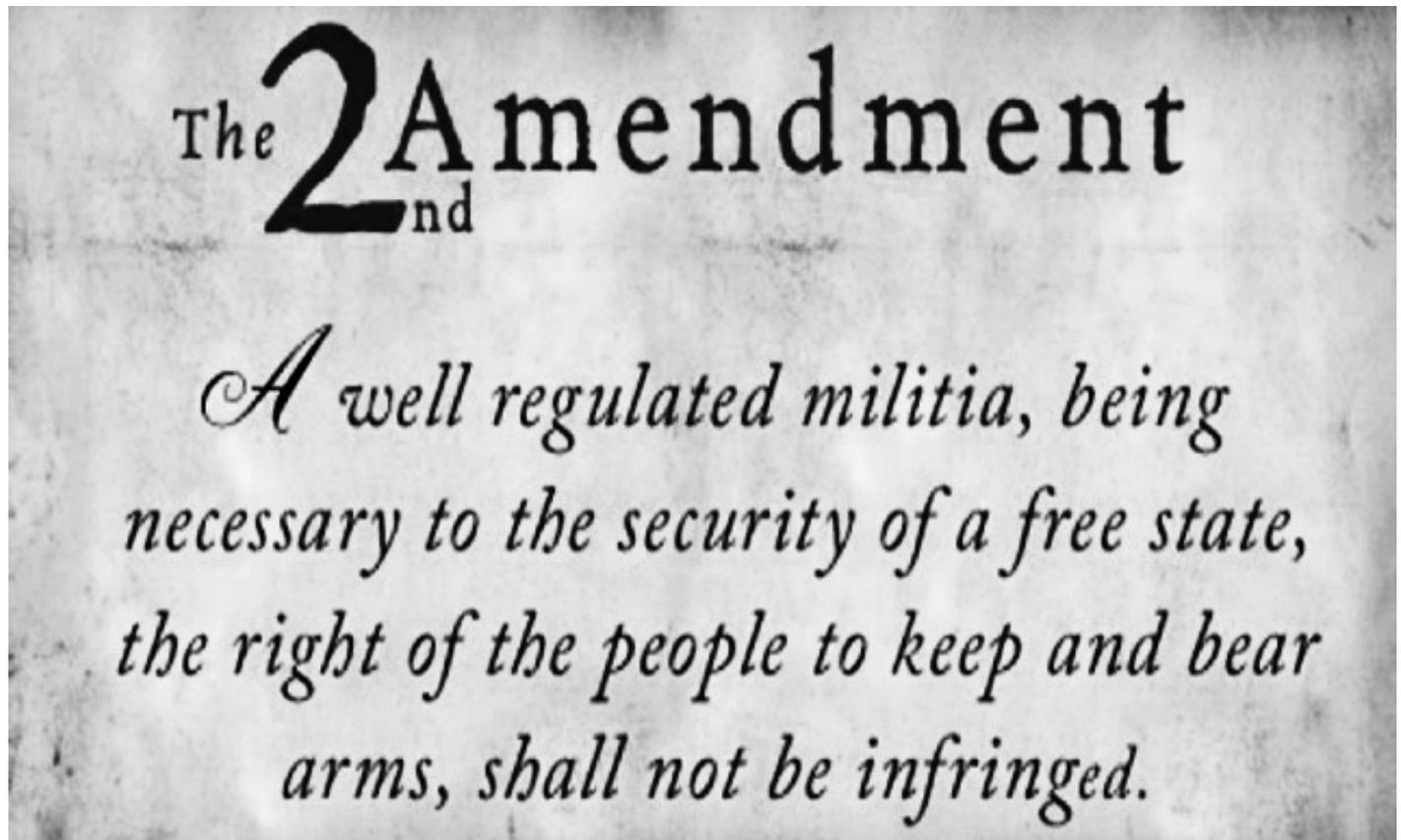
In my apostolic life, every assignment has been a new sojourn into confusion. I can’t remember ever starting an assignment where I thought I knew what I was doing. I have had diverse assignments that have created a career that looks more like a patchwork quilt than a planned and precisely woven tapestry. Each assignment has been so different from what I had done before, that each assignment has been more of a professional re-booting than a transition. While I have been able to take what I learned in one job into the next, I have begun every assignment in a panic of confusion. In that confusion was the grace of recognition that to do the new ministry well, I would need to address a pressing need to learn and grow professionally. While each of those beginnings has been uncomfortable, I can see how important and

formative it has been. Fear of failure has been a great motivator for continuing formation and the desire to be a lifelong learner.

In our formation program we recognize the value of confusion. We encourage candidates to be challenged through engagement with other cultures; through ministerial experiences that frighten them; by asking them to reexamine the assumptions and easy answers that they have used to construct their self-identity as men of faith and ministers in the church. They don’t always like that, but we believe that it is in these experiences that grace is discovered.

Not many of us like being confused. Not many of us like to struggle with ambiguity. We find comfort in familiar faith formulations and our tried and true ministerial assumptions. But we are responsible for our own continuing formation, so find a way to be confused: struggle with a big question and engage mystery; agree to do something that will require you to learn something new. We discover the sacred in confusion, because grace seeps through the cracks of confusion with greater ease than through a wall of certainty.





Corporate Statement Against Gun Violence

Fr. Tom Welk, C.P.P.S., Health and Wellness Committee

At our Province Assembly in June, the Peace and Justice Committee will present a statement against gun violence for a vote of approval. The statement is straightforward, affirming the sacredness of life and our duty to do whatever is necessary to control unlimited access to weapons and ammunition which end up being used in violent and destructive ways.

The national discussion over the course of the last several months has centered on “second amendment rights.” Those favoring unfettered “rights” to whatever type of gun or amount of ammunition they want claim their constitutional rights would be violated should there be passage of any “restrictive” laws. The phrase in the second amendment about “well regulated” seems to have been conveniently left out of the discussion on the part of those advocating unlimited and universal access.

Constitutional scholars and the Supreme Court have expended more than enough ink on interpreting the very brief second amendment. There is no need for me to add

to the abstract discussion of what this amendment may or may not require. What is clear is the incontrovertible present reality that those of us who hunt are already being “well regulated” as to the type of guns and/or ammunition we are allowed to use.

As someone who hunts and owns several guns for this purpose, I can categorically inform you that I am highly regulated in my hunting endeavors. Let me also add that having been born and raised on a farm in North Dakota, hunting was very much part of my upbringing. But guns were no big deal. They were viewed as just another tool for accomplishing a particular purpose: helping to put food on the table. Pheasant often replaced chicken for dinner. There was no obsession with guns or with any of the other “tools” on the farm. We didn’t even pretend they were needed to protect us or that the government was going to come and take them away from us.

Back to the point about being regulated as a hunter. This happens in several ways:

1. By law hunters are required to get a license to be allowed to hunt.
2. You cannot get a license to hunt unless you take and pass a hunter safety course. It is a course I taught in my younger days. Every state has some sort of gun safety course requirement, with the most relaxed requiring only children to take the courses prior to applying for a hunting license.
3. There are regulations as to what kind of gun I can use for different types of hunting. For example, I can only use a shotgun for wing-shooting (pheasants, ducks, etc.). No assault weapons allowed for pheasant hunting.
4. I cannot use ammo completely of my choice for particular types of hunting. This is tightly regulated on both state and federal levels.
5. When I am hunting with a shotgun, I am only allowed to have a total of three shells in my gun for hunting any migratory birds. Unlimited number of rounds is prohibited. Carrying a gun with a magazine capacity of 10, 30 or 100 rounds of ammunition is absolutely forbidden.
6. In addition to all of the above, the times when I can hunt are regulated by both the states and the federal government with the establishment of hunting seasons.
7. The law also regulates me on where I can hunt, what kind of game I can hunt, and on the number of game I am allowed to have.

The above listing is by no means exhaustive. There are other regulations that could be named. Are these laws violating my second amendment rights? According to the minority perspective of some members of our society, the answer to this question is “yes.” Yet, I personally do not know of any hunters who complain that these hunting regulations are taking away their freedom. It is a given that we need these rules to ensure the safety of fellow hunters and out of respect for our wildlife. After all, “well regulated” is a part of the second amendment.

It is ironic that we are more inclined to protect our wildlife than we are to protect our children. Led by the NRA and the gun lobby, some gun enthusiasts decry any and all efforts to pass reasonable laws limiting access to weapons of any type and any amount of ammunition.

In contrast to the regulatory laws sportsmen and women must follow, advocates of so-called second amendment rights would have us believe that even the

requirement of universal background checks for potential gun buyers is anathema. It gives the appearance that the means for “hunting men, women and children” should have no limits.

Precious Blood spirituality cries out for a different witness. We must promote a culture of life and peace. St. Gaspar’s message (quoted in the statement) encourages us to “try to make every effort to bring everything to a peaceful solution.”

It is my firm conviction that we as a religious community must “encourage and support measures to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to keep weapons out of the hands of those who seek to harm others.”



Companions of the Butternut/Park Falls group gathered in April to share a Day of Prayer led by Fr. Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S at St. Anthony of Padua Parish. Fr. Joe stressed the importance of relationships and inclusivity. Photos: (above) Companions Bob and Angie Schienebeck, Rose Schmidt, Agie and Bill Moser (behind Bob) during the covenant ceremony, (right) Fr. Joe Nassal presides at the Mass and Covenant Renewal ceremony.



Juvenile Justice Week

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

She's hard to miss in the crowd, but when she speaks, her story is similar to the rest in the group. Julie, a middle-aged woman from the south side of Chicago, tells of how at the age of 15 her son was given life without parole. He is now 35 years old, and for the past 20 years she has been driving back and forth, some seven hours each way, for a two to three hour visit. She or her husband makes that trek each week. Julie stands out not only because she is the sole white family member in our group of JLWOP (Juveniles with Life without Parole) families, but because of her upbeat disposition and a personality that lights up the room.

When I first met Julie at a coalition meeting, I remember two things that have stuck with me these years later. The first was when she said in the group, "This is not what I signed up for" (having her youngest son in prison for life). Her voice trembled, even as it was strong. Julie is a mother, wife of a police officer, and a staunch Irish Catholic. She is also the mother of a son who will die in prison—a sentence given to him when he was fifteen. The second thing Julie said that has stayed with me all these years was, "I don't want to grow to be a bitter old woman." That struck me because it was clear that she understood well what her life could lead to if she let it. She knows that unless she turns this tragedy into something more, she will become embittered and angry.

Julie's story could be the story of any of us reading this column. When you hear her story and listen to her words it makes you feel "there but for the grace of God go I." She and her husband Rick did everything they could to steer their son to a better life. She sought out every intervention, including a Catholic education, for him. She left no stone unturned in an effort to get help for her son. Unfortunately, there was little help coming. Too many—including the Catholic school—responded by alienating him. He was expelled from the Catholic school, juvenile court refused services, and even though she asked for counseling, none was available to her son. She speaks from her heart when she explains to the group that when the crime happened, she and her family suffered; they were alienated from friends and neighbors. Even the people closest to her began to distance themselves, as though she, too, was guilty of the crime.

Julie's story is not unique. What might be unique or amazing is that Julie continues to be a staunch Catholic.

She is active in her parish; she is active with us here at PBMR, and leads the family group of those who have a son or daughter with life without parole given to them when they were children. There are 100 other families who have experienced what she and her family have experienced in Illinois alone—another 2,500 families across the country—all children given a life sentence without any possibility of parole.

Sr. Donna, Fr. Denny and I all accompany young people who are also juvenile lifers. Adolfo is one who I visit regularly, Donna visits Jackie, and Denny visits James. I have known Adolfo since he entered Juvenile Detention Center at the age of 14. That was 22 years ago. He was with some older youth when they tried to rob a drug house that left two dead, one being his friend. Even though he was never accused of doing the crime, because of the accountability laws, he was given a sentence of life without parole at the age of 14. Now at the age of 36, he still sits in prison; unless the law changes, he will die in prison.

We have just concluded the Juvenile Justice Week of Faith and Healing—an effort to bring attention to the many justice issues that affect our children. We encouraged other churches, synagogues and mosques to join us in an effort to bring awareness to a hidden and too often forgotten population of youth in our society. As a faith community, we have a special responsibility to create an environment in which our children are given a second chance.



Community

Leadership, continued from page 12

challenge and broaden them, something that would help their spiritual growth and learning. Another said: “I appreciated being allowed to be open and have different opinions about things. I knew that the priests and brothers were supportive of these conversations. It was a safe place to talk and be myself. There was a whole new perspective that went beyond black and white, a new place, a new way to talk about church.”

I was reminded of Shield’s article, where he wrote: “The freedom to express one’s opinion, to form judgments that lead to shared convictions and united action is a hallmark of a healthy society and a condition for the common good...Public opinion...remains...a critical form of participation in the common life of a nation and even a church. It fosters action worthy of free, intelligent persons, who in religious discourse are made in ‘the image and likeness of God.’” Sadly, I often see this not respected as a value in the Church, especially as applied to those who don’t have much power or authority. I am pleased that we as a community of incorporated members, covenanted companions and committed candidates and volunteers strive to be otherwise—in our governance, in our apostolates, in our spirituality, and in how we live with one another.

One member of the group shared her memory of the resistance or unease that some members initially had toward the idea of companions. But that changed: “I remember Fr. Charlie Meyer, one of the oldest members at the time, coming up to me at an assembly and saying, ‘You’re one of those new people, aren’t you? I’m glad you’re here. We need you.’” That wonderfully welcoming statement says it all. It’s no accident that companions make “covenant” with the community. The very meaning of covenant is that it works both ways, two groups committing themselves to each other.

Precious Blood volunteers are the latest members of

our family. While their relationship to the community is not ritualized (with, for example, covenants), they are considered an important part of the community. Their mission statement says in part: “Our mission is to form lay Christians in Precious Blood spirituality by building community, walking with those who suffer, and seeking reconciliation in a divided world.” At the companion gathering, Michael D’Netto shared that he looked at four different volunteer programs, but decided on Precious Blood Volunteers because he saw in us an effort to respect and care for all kinds of people. In speaking of his participation in the Kansas City Companion Group, he said: “The companion group has helped me keep a broad perspective, to see Christ in all people, to keep me thinking, to keep my faith growing. I am impressed by the fact that companions take it very seriously to invite new people into the group, and to understand spirituality and mission so much better.”

In his article, Shields states that the “well-being of the church as a believing people requires that each contribute to the Christian identity and faithful commitment of all, toward a consciousness of who they are and how they are seen as church.” And again: “A reflective and vocal process of ‘who we are’ and ‘where we are going’ is essential to participation in any human community. Active participation in the life of the church implies co-responsibility for the church.” The same is true for the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Frances summed it up well in her article: “How God may literally pull us into the arms of the Precious Blood is a gift to accept; how we go on to grow in our sense of and participation in community is very much our responsibility.”

The New Wine Press

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

Change Service Requested

Leadership Team

Incorporated, Covenanted, Committed

Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S., Vice-Provincial

I recently experienced a serendipitous overlapping of events that resulted in some new and renewed insights. It began with an article by Richard Shields in the latest issue of *National Catholic Reporter*, which addressed the issue of leadership and governance and the “voice of the faithful” in the Catholic Church.

He began by noting that the election of Pope Francis had raised some hopes of “a movement away from an organizational structure that gives priests and bishops... superior ecclesiastical status and exclusive rights to the truth of Christ’s gospel, along with the power to enforce what they believe.” He asserts that 50 years after Vatican II there is still a very sharp distinction in the Church between clergy and laity: “Priests and bishops can override or ignore the aspirations and hopes of parishioners. The distribution of power and legitimating of authority remain beyond the reach of most Catholics, leaving an image of ‘a pyramid of power,’ in which church officials exercise sovereign control over the institution and its members.” He then quickly adds, “Let me concede that the church is not a democracy, with the counter position that *nothing prevents it from being a community of dialogue, mutual respect and shared decision-making*” [emphasis mine].

Several days after reading this article, I joined members of the Kansas City Companion Group for their May gathering. Precious Blood volunteer Michael D’Netto also took part. As he indicates in his article elsewhere in

this issue, his time as a volunteer is coming to a close. He has been living with us at Gaspar Mission House and has been welcomed into the Kansas City Companion Group, where he has been a faithful participant.

As a starting point for discussion and sharing, the group used Frances Flanagan’s article, “The Heart of Community,” published in the March 2011 issue of *The New Wine Press*. In this article, Frances tells of the time she was tutoring then Deacon Dien Truong in English while he was serving at St. Francis Xavier Parish in St. Joseph. She wrote: “Sometimes, too, we just talked. From our conversations I learned that Deacon Dien loved God, the Church, and the Society very much. One day when we were talking about the Society, I heard myself saying *our* provincial instead of *your* provincial. I took me a few seconds to realize what had happened. Then I knew that the wall that had kept me at a distance from both members and other Companions had been broken down....Now...I have a second family....Prayer by prayer, gathering by gathering, hug by hug, I am still learning to be a part of the Precious Blood community.”

This article, along with some good “starter” questions provided by facilitator Rita McNally, was an impetus for the group to reflect on what motivated them to eventually make covenant as a companion, and the experience of going from “your” community to “our” community. Some spoke of feeling invited to something that would

continued on page 11