

THE New Wine PRESS

Volume 26 No. 10 • June 2018





Let us serve God with holy joy.

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

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Cover photo: Precious Blood Volunteers during their Winter Retreat in Chicago, December 2017

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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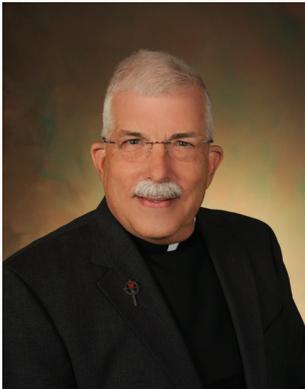
Missionaries of the Precious Blood
Kansas City Province

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

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

Layout & Design
Margaret Haik
communications@preciousbloodkc.org

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Stand by Me

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

“Amen! Amen! Amen! Amen! Amen! This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine!” As the new Duke and Duchess of Sussex (otherwise known as Harry and Meghan) left the chapel following their wedding, those words rang out through the voices of the Kingdom Choir, a multi-denominational black gospel group from the south of England. Given the song’s history and the diversity injected into the British royal family through this marriage, plus its enduring message, it was an inspired choice to close the ceremony.

“This Little Light of Mine” was written in the 1920s by Harry Dixon Loes, a teacher at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, who came up with the catchy tune as a Bible lesson for children. In the 1950s, the song was modified by activists in the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. and became one of its most popular anthems.

For most wedding participants and viewers, it was the choir’s rendition of “Stand By Me” that was the most moving, coming as it did just before the exchange of vows. Again, the history of the song is helpful. The lyrics, written by two Jewish composers, are clearly derived from Psalm 46 of the Hebrew Scriptures: “God is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in distress. Thus, we do not fear, though earth be shaken and mountains quake to the depths of the sea, though its waters rage and foam and mountains totter at its surging.” It has more remote origins in a hymn with the same name, composed in 1905 by Charles Tindley, an African-American Methodist minister and noted preacher. It was first recorded and popularized by Ben E. King in 1961.

*When the night has come
And the land is dark
And the moon is the only light we’ll see
No I won’t be afraid, No I won’t be afraid
Just as long as you stand, stand by me*

*If the sky that we look upon
Should tumble and fall
Or the mountains should crumble to the sea
I won’t cry, I won’t cry
No I won’t shed a tear
Just as long as you stand, stand by me*

The song is about love but also packs a political message. Meant to foster solidarity and friendship through its lyrics, it too gained a great deal

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Healing Broken Spirits

by Fr. Tom Welk, C.P.P.S., Provincial Council

The woman sitting in front of me (with bullet-proof glass between us) in the Sedgwick County jail was, obviously, a broken individual. She was in the jail after being accused of abusing her nearly three-year-old son to the point of causing his death. Her live-in boyfriend was also there in the jail. She had asked to see me. He had not.

During our hour-long conversation she shared openly about her past life. Several times she acknowledged that what she and her boyfriend did was inexcusable. As she stated, “I know many of the people here claim that they are innocent of what they are accused of. They claim the charges are false. My boyfriend and I are guilty of killing our son.” She expressed honest and sincere remorse about what they had done.

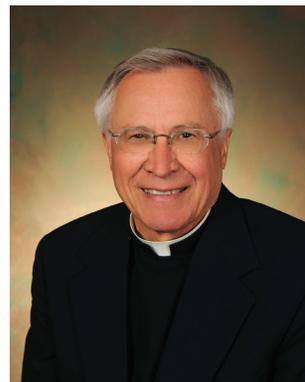
She continued, “We were out of control. We did not know how to discipline him. We had no parenting skills. We contacted DCF [Department of Children and Families] for help. We never heard back from them.” (Let me add by way of comment about this: the Kansas budget was devastated during the administration of the past governor due to massive tax cuts. Many social programs in Kansas were cut to the bone to make up for the revenue shortfall.)

It was not just what this woman shared with me that led me to conclude she had gone through some rough times. Her physical appearance spoke volumes. Two of her front teeth were missing; she had an ugly scar on her forehead. I did not press her to share any details. What I did share was this observation, “You impress me as someone having a broken soul.” I quickly changed my comment to, “You impress me as someone having a broken spirit.” With that the floodgates opened.

No one can live with a broken spirit. Sad to say, there are many in our world with broken spirits. They are in desperate need of healing. We recently celebrated the feast of Pentecost. It is the feast when we are gifted with a Spirit that is Holy; a Spirit of Wholeness. It is the gift that Jesus came to bring us. We are not always a holy people. Sin is part and parcel of our lives. Rather than holy spirits, unholy spirits rule us at times.

Sinfulness is another way to describe brokenness. Though we are often separated from God, Jesus on the other hand was always in complete union with God. There was no sinfulness, no brokenness in him. Continuing to provide this ministry of healing was the commission given the followers of Jesus. As is recorded in the gospel of John: “As the Father

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Everyday Holiness

by Fr. Keith Branson, C.P.P.S., Kansas City

“To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves” (Gaudete et Exsultate, paragraph 14).

Gaudete et Exsultate arrived on April 9, 2018, completing a set of four Apostolic Exhortations by Pope Francis on different spiritual challenges of our times. Just as *Evangelii Gaudium* set out a spirituality of mission, *Laudato Si'* an ecological spirituality, and *Amoris Laetitia* a spirituality of family life, this document lays out a contemporary spirituality of holiness in everyday life clearly based on Catholic tradition. It is a relatively short document, containing only 177 paragraphs, yet almost every one has something profound to offer.

Our founder Gaspar del Bufalo sought to proclaim and model holiness in everyday life, and wanted his missionaries to do the same. He got most of his ideas on community life and individual spirituality from two main sources: *The Introduction to the Divine Life* by

St. Francis des Sales, and the *Practice of Perfection and Christian Virtues* by Alonso Rodriguez, s.j. The latter work, written around 1600 in Spain, is a detailed guide on religious life which was a textbook for many communities until Vatican II. Both bear testimony to the practice of the little virtues: humility, meekness, charity, gentleness; both were concerned with practical holiness. Giovanni Merlini, our third Moderator General, referenced Rodriguez in his circular letters both directly and indirectly.

Pope Francis has given us an instant spiritual classic, updating these works in an accessible way. I would recommend anyone the study of this document: it is very accessible and easy to read, easy to understand. It is a great starting point for someone wanting to learn

everyday holiness, who has not done much spiritual reading. The only thing that is not easy is living by these precepts.

I think the best parts (if you read no other part) are the third and fourth chapters. Chapter three (paragraphs 67-109) gives a four-paragraph overview of each of Matthew's Beatitudes. The next 47 paragraphs (chapter four) unpack the virtues for living the Beatitudes: perseverance, patience, meekness, joy, a sense of humor, boldness, passion, living in community, and living in constant prayer. The reflections here would be an excellent source for a personal day of reflection or a retreat.

The other parts are quite useful as well. Pope Francis provides a detailed critique of two revived heresies—Gnosticism and Pelagianism—that threaten our spiritual welfare. Gnosticism is a tendency to reduce faith to pure ideas. Pelagianism holds up practice—doing the right things—as the main means of salvation, rather than God's mercy through Christ. Both have a tendency to diminish the role of the real presence of Christ and dependence on His love and mercy.

The last section gives the best description of spiritual combat I have seen, with a firm warning about complacency. Pope Francis says: "Spiritual corruption is worse than the fall of a sinner, for it is a comfortable and self-satisfied form of blindness. Everything then appears acceptable: deception, slander, egotism, and other subtle forms of self-centeredness...."

As Precious Blood people, this gift from the Holy Father will lead us to uncover some of the roots of community life Gaspar sought to instill from the beginning. It is also a practical guide—useful for any spiritual seeker—which proclaims the dignity and equality of every vocation, every occupation, every journey we make:

"Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by laboring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain" (paragraph 14). ✠

Leadership, continued from page 3

has sent me, so I send you." Then he breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive others' sins they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound" (20:31-33).

This commission given by Jesus did not stop with his immediate followers. The call to engage in the ministry of healing broken spirits continues throughout the generations of followers of Jesus. It was a call St. Gaspar heard; it was a call St. Maria heard. It was a call to engage in bringing healing to many in their time and place. It was a call to continue Jesus' work of reconciliation.

It is a call that we also must heed and follow. How to answer this call effectively can challenge us. It is a question we are presently wrestling with in the Cincinnati and Kansas City Provinces. What has worked in the past may not necessarily work today. What new creation will enable us to do so? The Holy Spirit is not just a Spirit of Wholeness, it is also a Spirit of Wisdom. It is a Spirit that is freely given to us. The question for us is: Is it a Spirit we are willing to embrace fully as we wrestle with coming up with a new creation?

Pope Francis has been setting an example for us. In his most recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, he encourages the followers of Jesus to continue his work by reaching out to those who are broken in spirit. This brokenness can take many forms. As he writes, "Our defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person regardless of his or her stage of development. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery and every form of rejection."

The woman who was sitting in front of me in the jail is only one of the many in our world with a broken spirit. It was to such people that Jesus reached out to bring healing. It is a call that is extended to us, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." May we faithfully follow this call. ✠

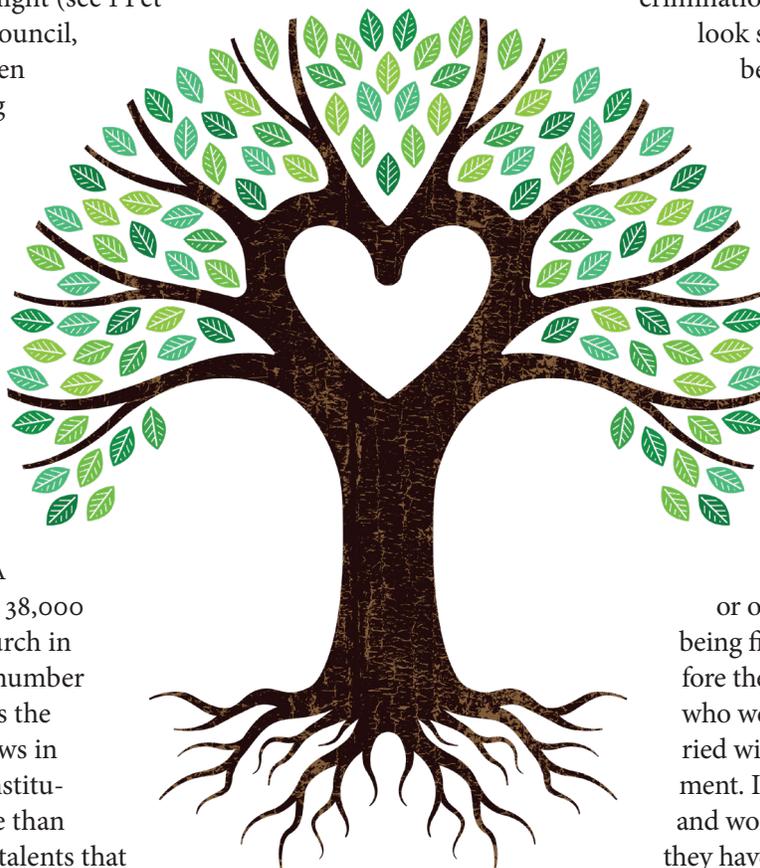
Leaves of Peace & Justice

by Vicky Otto, Companions Director, LGBT Ministry Committee Member

Throughout the documents of Vatican II, the bishops encouraged the baptismal call of the laity. In the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* they wrote, “The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, that through all their Christian activities they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the marvels of him who has called them out of darkness into his wonderful light (see 1 Pet 2:4-10).” Following the council, many lay men and women obtained formal training in theology and ministry to answer the call of service that they discerned for themselves. An ongoing phenomenon in the institutional Church has been the growing number of lay men and women working in the Church who serve in professional ministry. In 2011, a CARA study reported that over 38,000 lay people serve the Church in salaried positions. This number has continued to grow as the Catholic population grows in the United States. The institutional Church now more than ever needs the gifts and talents that lay people can offer. Yet an unspoken and silent conundrum now is serving as a source of discouragement regarding answering the call to service.

In 2016, Jeffrey Higgins was fired as a cantor in his parish because he got married. Several school teachers across the country have also been fired because they got married. Susan was fired from her position as parish administrator after she reported inappropriate use of parish funds by her pastor to authorities in the archdiocese. Firings such as these have begun to surface in the media recently because in

many circumstances reporters have seen a correlation between the firings and the employee’s sexual orientation or because the individual was civilly married to their partner. Fr. James Martin, S.J. offered a response regarding these firings that I found interesting. He wrote, “The selectivity of focus on LGBT people and their sexual morality is, in the words of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, a sign of ‘unjust discrimination.’ We choose to overlook some of the other matters because we’ve accommodated those situations.”



While I agree with Fr. Martin that this is a justice issue, I disagree that it is exclusively an LGBT issue. I have served in the Church for many years and have witnessed lay people being fired for reporting inappropriate behavior of pastors or other clergy, single people being fired for living together before they were married, or those who were divorced and remarried without obtaining an annulment. I have also witnessed men and women being fired because they have spoken out or written, or participated in demonstrations

that challenge the teachings of the institutional Church. The situations also change if the employee is a man or a woman, with different standards set for both. While every bishop across the country may determine how the varied teachings of the Church are interpreted and how these rulings affect the personnel in each of the churches, the wide variation of these interpretations create an environment where in one diocese the actions of an employee may be accepted while in another it is grounds for immediate firing. One article about lay workers in the Church described this environment as “working in a mine field.”

There is a sentence in the vision statement for our Congregation that gives me hope in times like this: “Our mission is to be a prophetic witness for the renewal of the Church and the transformation of the world.” The teachings of the Church are vitally important in our world today and are not in dispute. Nor is the ministry of the bishops. Yet the unjust environment that is created through the varied interpretation of tradition must be challenged.

So where do we go from here? As Precious Blood people, in order to live out our calling to be prophetic witnesses, we must stand with these lay men and women who find themselves on the margins of the Church and have often faced unjust treatment. We need to help create safe spaces, so lay staff people can speak honestly about their experiences without fear of retribution. We need to create safe spaces where honest dialogue can occur between lay staff and those in institutional Church leadership. There are more and more empty spaces in churches and in church offices because many have seen their friends and family experience these injustices and are reticent to encourage others to step forward in service. There are many wounds that have been experienced in the stories of the lay men and women who have faced these injustices. While the journey is full of twists and turns, our spirituality calls us to journey with everyone in the spirit of reconciliation and renewal.

Pope Paul VI wrote, “Liturgy is like a strong tree whose beauty is derived from the continuous renewal of its leaves, but whose strength comes from the old trunk, with solid roots in the ground.” I believe that he would say the same thing about the institutional Church. May we continue to help grow new leaves that will offer an environment of peace and justice for everyone today. It will be then that we can say we truly were prophetic witnesses. ✠

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of popularity as a (sometimes covert) protest song during the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. It takes on greater power and a new level of meaning when you picture an African-American person in the 1960s singing the words, “No, I won’t be afraid.” I am reminded of Martin Luther King’s words in the speech he gave on the night before he was murdered: “I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up

to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. So, I’m happy tonight. *I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man*” [italics mine].

In hindsight, what held the entire service together for me was the sermon by Bishop Michael Curry, which was preached just before the song and vows. Near the conclusion, he proclaimed:

Think and imagine a world where love is the way. Imagine our homes and families where love is the way. Imagine neighborhoods and communities where love is the way. Imagine governments and nations where love is the way. Imagine business and commerce where this love is the way. Imagine this tired old world where love is the way. When love is the way—unselfish, sacrificial, redemptive.

When love is the way, then no child will go to bed hungry in this world ever again. When love is the way, we will let justice roll down like a mighty stream and righteousness like an ever-flowing brook. When love is the way, poverty will become history. When love is the way, the earth will be a sanctuary. When love is the way, we will lay down our swords and shields, down by the riverside, to study war no more.

When love is the way, there’s plenty good room—plenty good room—for all of God’s children. Because when love is the way, we actually treat each other, well... like we are actually family.

Ultimately, it’s all about being family. And that means standing with one another, letting our little lights shine against the darkness, and letting unselfish, sacrificial, redemptive love be “the way.”

In the words of Pope Francis, quoted elsewhere in this issue, “We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves.... Be holy by living out your commitment with joy.” ✠

Reflections from Precious Blood Volunteers

Tim Deveney, Precious Blood Volunteers Director, asked this year's volunteers to answer three questions:

1. *What is/are some relationship(s) that have stood out for you during your time as a Precious Blood Volunteer?*
2. *What are some of the experiences that have stood out for you during your time as a Precious Blood Volunteer?*
3. *How have you grown during your time as a Precious Blood Volunteer?*

The following are their answers.



Leah Landry, PBMR

My most impactful relationship as a Precious Blood Volunteer has been with the first young woman I met at PBMR. Meeting and getting to know her throughout the year completely changed my world-

view. She is a 23-year-old young woman who was born and raised on the south side of Chicago. I am a 23-year-old young woman who was born and raised in the suburbs of Chicago.

By becoming friends with this woman, I see firsthand how the system is set up in a way that allowed me to go to college and start my career while it has hindered her at every turn. She is determined, however, and it has been an honor to walk with her as she got a job, found housing and daycare, and dedicates her whole life to making sure her three-year-old daughter can have a better one. I've witnessed her fight to get a job for three months until she finally secured a good one. I've driven her to the hospital twice—once as her sister gave birth to twins and once when her boyfriend was shot at on his way to work. I've watched her parent her extremely energetic three-year-old, even when she's exhausted from working six days a week and cannot possibly answer the question "Whatcha doin'?" one more time.

Getting to know this young woman has personalized a life that I only knew from statistics about gun violence and poverty. Her friendship has given me a whole new perspective on the challenges people face in Back of the Yards, the strengths of the community that we tend to overlook, and on my own upbringing and privileges I'd once taken for granted. I am so grateful for her friendship and for continued patience as I learned and grew and tried to understand as best I could.

I have worked at PBMR for nine months. In that time, two of the young people at the Center have been shot and killed. These experiences, especially the death of Branden a month ago, have shaken me. Branden was the first young person I met at the Center. He was at the Center almost every day and was always the first guy to greet me when I walked in. I knew that the young people were in danger every time they walk outside, but I don't think the reality of that hit me until Sr. Donna told me that Branden was dead. Branden—who had been at the Center a few hours before, who had shared his Doritos with me just a day before, who's bright smile and beautiful dreads were such a common sight that I'd started not to notice—was dead. Shot and killed in his grandma's backyard.

The fragility of life has never been that close to me before. For someone younger than me—and healthy and strong and so full of life—to be dead was incomprehensible. And not just dead but murdered. It seems different somehow than someone who dies from a sickness or even a freak accident. It was intentional and cruel and unnecessary. I'm not sure I've even fully accepted Branden's death yet. Every time I see his photo I have to remind myself that he's gone, that he's not going to come back.

I've heard about the shootings in Chicago my whole life. But first with Isaiah and then with Branden, I see that these events are not just statistics. It's a trauma that affects so many lives. And if Branden's death has shaken me this much, what must it be like for the people who have known him his whole life, who have grown up in the neighborhood and experienced countless other murders, and who don't have the choice to leave as I do? Gun violence in Chicago no longer feels like a hot button political discussion. It has a face and a name and an experience for me. The memories of Branden and Isaiah will stay with me long after I leave the Center.



Leah Landry, John Lee, Hector Avitia, and Lota Ofodile, August 2018

My time as a Precious Blood Volunteer has brought my idealism down a few pegs. I came to PBMR with my Peace Studies lessons on social justice and community change buzzing in my head. Working at PBMR has forced me to put into action the values I had always championed, and it made me question and refine them. For example, Peace Studies taught me that all social change should be led and directed by the people in the community, that those closest to the problems have the best solutions. So, when I was asked to start the Young Women's Group at PBMR, that was how I wanted the group to be structured. The young women should tell us what they wanted and be a part of the planning process.

However, this did not go as planned. First, the young women did not even show up. We had multiple meetings where only one person came. It took six months for a consistent group of young women to start turning up, but when I'd ask them what they wanted to do, they'd look at me blankly. I started coming up with the ideas and running them past them instead: trip to the aquarium, a painting class, parenting support group. Finally, two of the young women suggested a class they wanted to have. I arranged a meeting with a facilitator and the young women so they could be a part of the planning process. Only one young woman showed up—an hour late—to the planning meeting and no one came to the class itself. I was constantly feeling guilty as I thought that our group was not based on what the young women wanted and needed but based on my ideas and connections. The times I felt I was living out the value of community-led change, the results were disastrous.

But reflecting back, I realize that I was living out this value, just not in the way I expected. This last month, the young women have started suggesting events. They

asked to go out to dinner downtown and to have a zoo outing with their children, so that's what we planned. It took eight months, but I think it's because they rarely had people asking them before. It takes a while to get comfortable articulating your needs and wants, and you have to build trust first. I also noticed that the young women did tell us what they wanted earlier on, just not as directly as I expected. They told me all the time how hard motherhood was, so we hosted a mothers' support group. When they showed an interest in the art class, we had a mural painting inspired and painted by the women.

My time as a volunteer has shown me that the values that I hold so closely are more flexible than I anticipated and sometimes I will be more successful at living them out than others. Even more, I now understand that being true to your values is hard and it takes time to work your way up to them, especially when you are an outsider. You have to gain trust before you can get anywhere, and you have to be willing to listen to the people you work with and be aware of different ways they communicate their needs and wants. Being a volunteer has given me the opportunity to try to live out my values and forced me to see that it is easy to talk a big game but much harder to live it out.

Hector Avitia, PBMR



The relationship that stands out the most to me is the one I developed with Aldena, a grandmother and student in our Education Lab. Prior to joining PBMR, I had worked with teenagers and young adults for over ten years. When I chose to volunteer at PBMR I knew that I would be working with the same age group, so making a connection with an African-American grandmother came as a surprise. Aldena and I have very different backgrounds, and on the surface it would not make sense why we would connect. Through the Education Lab we found common ground. She already had some knowledge and tons of potential, but needed someone who could help her bring that potential to life. I had no experience tutoring, but somehow we understood each other and fed off the other's energy. I would get excited to see her pick up a new skill in math or when

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she would receive her good grades, while she enjoyed my patience and consistency with her.

One of the best experiences I had as a volunteer this year was when I helped a young man get his driver's license. He had taken the written test about a year ago, but he felt really nervous about trying again and failing. He and I went over a practice test to make sure he was as ready as possible to pass the written test. He was really nervous going to the DMV, and his concerns were only exasperated by the obstacles we encountered at the facility.

When we first arrived, there was a line out the door. A lot of people were complaining about having to wait outside in the cold. This fueled him a little and he took part in the complaints. We made it in, and after having his documents checked, we had to wait in another line to have his picture taken. With only two more people ahead of us, the DMV announced that we had to wait in line while the staff went on lunch! He just about lost it and almost walked off. At this point we had stood in line for about an hour and a half. After the lunch break he was able to finally get his picture taken, but the clerk had him retake his picture six times because the facial recognition technology was not capturing all the points on his face. At this point, we were tired of standing and waiting and were hungry, but we were not done.

It was time to take the written portion of the test. The tests are administered on computers, and when he got up from his station I gave him two thumbs up, gesturing "Yes? You passed?"—to which he replied with



John Lee, Marijo Gabriel, Alia Sisson, and Martin Ehtler at Cristo Rey Kansas City High School, August 2017

his own two thumbs up and a big smile. We finally had something in the win column. The final obstacle was the actual driving test. I don't know which of us was more nervous. He had overcome so much and only one more test stood between him and his license. He jumped into the vehicle with the instructor. Again, I felt helpless because I could not even stand by him to provide support. After pacing for what felt like hours, he walked into the waiting area with another big smile.

On the ride back to PBMR he kept looking at his temporary license and began to do something I have rarely seen in these young men. He was able to talk about his plans and goals in such a way that sounded like they were within his reach. He would go on about getting auto insurance, getting a job, and not being scared of getting in trouble for driving without a license. The sky was the limit for this young man. When we arrived at the center he made sure to let everyone know that he got his license. Like a medal of honor, he flashed the small paper to everyone around. His expressions around the other youth were subtler than the ones I saw on the ride back to the center. I knew right then that I got to see a part of this young man that doesn't always get the chance to see the light. And for that, I am extremely grateful.

I have grown in several ways this volunteer year. The biggest change that I have noticed about myself is how much better I have become at not judging individuals who do not think or act like me. Last year, I was one of those people who would ask myself "Why can't they just work hard like me? Why can't they just get their act together?" I was too quick to judge one person's morals and who I thought they were, based on one event. I had little empathy and patience for those who were given opportunities and would not take advantage of them. I felt like anything that was said in their defense was just an excuse for their laziness and inability to act like an adult. I always believed that I had more challenges in my life than most Americans, and so there was no reason why anyone couldn't achieve what I had achieved.

Part of being trauma-informed is recognizing that when a person who has experienced extreme trauma acts out or behaves in such a way that most of us would consider immature or unreasonable, that those behaviors have been influenced by an intense negative experience. Once we judge someone and assume too much about him or her, we lose patience because we believe

that the only thing missing for this person to succeed is drive. We also assume that drive is directly linked to that person's self-worth and morals. By thinking this way, we no longer feel like there is anything to do except for that person to "grow up." In our trainings, we learned how the brain is affected by trauma, especially in younger people. One traumatic experience is enough to change the development of the brain forever, but many of the folks we work with have ongoing trauma. Having this awareness and knowledge has allowed me to act in a more compassionate way. By taking away the judgmental part of me out of the equation, I am able to step back and try to figure out how this individual has been affected by trauma and what I can do to help them overcome their obstacles. This in turn has improved my patience with everyone I encounter. I have not reached the level of understanding and compassion that I want, but I am very proud of the progress I have made.



Marijo Gabriel, PBMR

Some relationships that stand out to me are the ones with the adolescents and younger children. They are the ones that bring me the most joy and at times the most worry. With them I realize the best gift I can give is the attention and support they seek and time to really be a kid. I think we can forget or dismiss children or just want to keep them occupied, but this is when they need someone the most. They are at such an important developmental stage, where they are absorbing the world around them faster than they can understand it, and where it's easier to not take the time to critically think about consequences and situations. We have to meet them where they are.

Experiences that have stood out to me during my service year are those where I've been able to witness and be a part of in building community and restoring dignity and worth. For example, when people say you never know the significance of a moment until it's past is definitely true. The moment I'm remembering specifically is when we were celebrating one of the mayor's mentoring initiative mentees birthdays. We were singing, eating cake, having a good time. Then the following weekend the birthday celebrant and his friend who was sitting next to him during the party were involved in a gun incident sending both to the hospital and one

briefly to the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center. They both could have died.

This year I've been able to grow more by experiencing God as Agape and connecting that with our human experience. Our understanding of what God is and what love is, is limited to our human capacity. Through interacting, witnessing, and being able to encounter and be vulnerable to the joys and pains of realities of many people in our Back of the Yards community family I was able to catch glimpses of God—which are the moments and emotions that make us truly human. It's appreciating life, time, and people through an Agape lens, because it is more than a noun and a verb, it's a guideline on how to be truly human and to be our authentic selves.



John Lee, Cristo Rey Kansas City High School

I can't say enough about the relationships and bonds that I was able to make with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, the Cristo Rey Staff, and the Cristo Rey students.

But throughout my experience, the relationships that stood out to me the most were the bonds that I formed with my fellow Precious Blood Volunteers and Jesuit Volunteer Corps Volunteers.

All of us served at different placements and had drastically different challenges to face and overcome. Even so, we were able to find time throughout the week, even if it was a brief conversation, to check up on each other and hear about what each of us was going through. We had our ups and downs, but to know I had the full support of each of my new friends really kept me going.

Two experiences that stand out to me are: seeing moments of realization and understanding in my students, and living in community. To this day, I honestly am not sure what compares to seeing that moment in your students' eyes when the material finally "clicks." The days—sometimes weeks—of working with students finally comes to a singular moment where clarity strikes. There is just something beautiful about witnessing the entire process of a student grow from struggling and frustration in their work to truly believing in their own potential and thriving in the classroom.

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Living in community is an experience that I've never experienced for this long of a period. It's an experience that you cannot find in many other places other than when you are volunteering. To come together with a group of complete strangers who have completely different backgrounds solely through the desire to serve others and the community is an indescribable concept. It's something that I never really pictured myself wanting so much now after having it come to an end.

During my time as a Precious Blood Volunteer, I saw the biggest growth in my perspective towards time. I came into the volunteering experience with an open mind, expecting to make a difference in a positive way. I knew coming into the experience that I would serve as a volunteer for six months. Initially, I thought that this was a long period of time, but in reality it was the exact opposite. I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to change lives. I wanted to do everything that I could to make a positive impact in someone else's life. I would go head first into every situation, and I forgot that relationships don't always work in such a fast-paced manner. I was clouded by my desire to help so much that I forgot to stop and say hello. I was trying to run before I could walk. As a volunteer, I was able to grow and realize that time and patience are essential in moving forward.



Lota Ofodile, KC CARE Clinic

At the start of my volunteer commitment, I had expected to develop close interpersonal relationships with certain people such as my co-volunteers and housemates, especially considering the emphasis the program placed on community living. But there was no way for me to imagine the level of trust and friendship that blossomed throughout the course of this experience. I am most grateful for the Kansas City volunteers who were just a delight to live with. John, Alia and Martin—thank you for your patience, openness and willingness to accept me for all my flaws and differences, and for making me feel comfortable enough to share my life with you. Fr. Garry and Fr. Dick, who are essentially parents to us, to the point that the house always felt incomplete whenever any of them travelled. I am grateful to Tim for always being the guy to count on, who facilitated and fostered these relationships and made it easy for us to let

our guards down and truly be one with each other. I am also thankful to the Kansas City Jesuit Volunteers, especially Katie Love who contributed to making my time at KC CARE Clinic memorable and gratifying.

It's hard to pick out specific experiences that stood out because the entire experience has been so remarkable. But generally, I would say:

1. Family dinners. I don't know if you have heard, but both Fr. Dick and Fr. Garry have culinary skills that I feel guilty for partaking in free of charge. But beyond that, it meant so much to be able to come home from work, especially after long days, and have a nice meal with everyone (including Juan whenever he could make it), and talk about our day, the news, share past memories, laugh, and just unwind.

2. Spirituality night. Once a month, Tim would come over to Gaspar House, and we would all reflect on whatever the theme and reading for that month was. It was an opportunity to hear each other out, as well as an avenue for open, honest and non-judgmental conversations about our personal beliefs and experiences. This tradition, in my opinion, was key in maintaining the sense of community we had with each other.

3. Working at the clinic. As an aspiring physician, I couldn't be more grateful for my time at KC CARE. It is widely accepted that being a good physician is being able to care for people, not just as it concerns their physical health, but also seeing them as they are and caring for their whole person. Everything about the clinic, from our patient demographic to our commitment to serve the marginalized, and the character of my colleagues, has definitely helped me develop my character in that light.

In so many ways! Most significant is my personal spiritual growth which was important to me coming in, and which this year has definitely enhanced. Besides more regular personal prayer and easy access to Mass—which is literally in my backyard (St Francis Xavier Parish)—I have come to realize that faith without works is indeed dead. I have come to understand that almost any activity we engage in can be a form of prayer as long as there is a God-consciousness to it. The intentional community living aspect of this experience has made me more

conscious of my personal habits and attitudes, and I believe has made me more open and accommodating of others. Lastly, working at the clinic has exposed me to such a diverse group of people, which constantly challenges me to dismiss the prejudices I had about individuals with backgrounds and lifestyles that are different from mine. I am also convinced, now more than ever, that despite the many social ills and injustices in our world today, the only way to progress involves selflessness, mutual respect, and seeing the God in each of us.

On the whole, I can definitively say that this experience has been so enriching on so many levels. I certainly got more out of it than I predicted, and I am eternally grateful for all of it, and everyone—friends, family, colleagues and the entire Precious Blood family—who have in one way or another contributed to my experience. Peace and blessings!



Alia Sisson, Legal Aid of Western Missouri

I'd like to start out saying I haven't had a bad relationship my entire time here, which is pretty wild considering how many people I've interacted with. From my RCIA Team at St.

Francis Xavier, to my #55 bus driver, to certain clients I've gained a rapport with, every relationship no matter how small has been enriching to my experience in some way.

However, I'd be remiss if I didn't give a special shout out to everyone I lived with here in Kansas City. Going to Mass almost every morning with Juan has been amazing. I loved hearing stories of Fr. Dick's childhood in Wisconsin and enjoying Fr. Garry's jokes and 5-star cooking. All of the volunteers will always hold a special place in my heart. We have bonded on different levels, but I can honestly say I appreciate everyone I've shared this experience with so much! I hope to stay in touch with the Chicago crew, and Martin, John, Lota (and Tim!) I hope will be lifelong friends.

Stand out experiences for me have all revolved around the people I most care about here. First, I was honored to be invited to Tim's mother's home in St. Louis for Thanksgiving and to share that singular

experience with Tim's family and Martin. More fond memories were having the Jesuit Volunteers over for dinner, the farewell parties for John and Martin, and celebrating my confirmation, to name a few. I also enjoyed our spirituality nights, retreats, and trip to Chicago. Some of my favorite memories from Kansas City are when my parents and best friend from college visited. It was so much fun to show them the city that I have grown to love (and of course stuff them with that famous Kansas City barbecue). Any time we get off our devices, break bread, and share our spirits makes me very happy.

I have been here for just enough time to achieve a pleasant rhythm and routine without it becoming monotonous. Knowing I was going to be at Legal Aid for nine months gave me the chance to dig deep and do some real work. Over this time span, I could see some of the fruits of my labor, while not getting so comfortable as to lose my spark. Not every day is fireworks and rainbows but finding the joy in sometimes banal tasks is a big part of being a good Christian. I don't have to be constantly entertained to do a good job and help people, and that has been a good lesson for me as I prepare for full time work for the next 40-ish years.

My job has also allowed me to grow in compassion and empathy. Asking women about the worse physical violence they have ever experienced is incredibly hard, but also having these women be so vulnerable and offer their stories really connected me to them. Through this experience, I have grown to see that everyone suffers, but some suffer far more trauma than others. It made me realize how fortunate I have been in my life and how much I want to help others who have experienced appalling abuse.

Through my experience as a Precious Blood Volunteer I have also grown spiritually. Going through RCIA from October through January really helped me focus in on what it is I love about the Roman Catholic faith. I have learned that I am more traditional in my faith than many people I am surrounded by, and that is OK, because there is no one right way to do it. As Catholicism is the universal church, it has enough room for licit diversity of thought and worship. I've grown closer to God through daily mass, prayer, and with the relationships I've forged with people here. Every day I try to invite God's Holy Spirit into my heart and get out

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of the way of my own spiritual progress. While far from perfect, without a doubt I am leaving this experience as a changed and better woman.



Martin Echtler, Bishop Sullivan Center

The former U.S. basketball star Michael Jordan once said, “I can accept failure, but I can’t accept not trying.” I read this quote on the wall of the dining room at the Bishop Sullivan

Center and it inspired and accompanied me during my time as a Precious Blood Volunteer. It stands for a lot of experiences I had during my time in Kansas City.

The Precious Blood community received me with open arms and with an unbelievable kindness. The life within the flat-sharing community at the Gaspar Mission House with Fr. Garry, Fr. Dick, Juan, my fellow Volunteers Lota, Alia and John (and not to forget our dog Buddy) was marked by mutual respect, helpfulness, and friendship. In addition, I had the chance to build up a lot of relationships at my volunteer placement, the Bishop Sullivan Center. Above all, I need to name Doug, the director of the Center, who took care of me in a very kind way. He showed me how to build up relationships with my co-workers and also the clients and visitors of the Center. But even more, he connected me to people who like German culture, especially soccer. It ended up that we met every Saturday morning to watch the matches with a lot of awesome people. But all these would have never been possible without Tim. He was always there as a helper, motivator, inspiration, and friend. We all walked a part of our way through this life together and it doesn’t matter what will happen in the future. You’ll all stay in my heart as friends and I hope we’ll meet again someday!

This climate of friendship helped me to try to help people. At the Bishop Sullivan Center, I had the chance to work in different fields of social support. A central part was the food pantry, where people get a certain amount of groceries every month, depending on the family size. A further part was the soup kitchen, which serves hot meals to people in need every night from Monday to Friday. Everybody is welcome to come, chat, and eat there. My time at the pantry and the kitchen was not only an inspiration, it also showed me a deeper



Martin Echtler at Bishop Sullivan Center, 2018

value of food. Our daily bread is not a matter of course! But I have not only started to see food from another perspective. During my work with assistance-applications it concerned also other basic needs like water, electricity and gas. I saw people struggle with their daily life in a tough way. To help these people was not always easy, because I had to deal with different limitations. Sometimes I was not able to provide the kind of help I wanted to and this can be a heartbreaking experience. But I also learned that “help” doesn’t always mean to provide physical goods—it sometimes means just to be there and listen. This awareness had a sustainable impact on me. It filled my heart with great pleasure to walk with people in need, even if it were only a few steps!

My time as Precious Blood Volunteer was not limited to building up friendships and trying to help people, it also helped me trying myself to grow. It’s not easy to bring these into words, because I see my personal growth during my volunteer time as a mosaic, a composition of many smaller and bigger experiences which influenced me in a variety of different ways. Retrospectively, I’m sure that conversations with people had the largest impact on me. Ordinary and extraordinary talks with a variety of different people about life, God and religion, family, friends, work, culture, problems, politics, sports, and many other topics showed me a great number of different perspectives and made my life so much richer.

In the end, I want to come back to the quote at the beginning. My time as a Precious Blood Volunteer made me more courageous to try. Trying is so important, because without trying we will never know about so many things. Of course, there’s always a risk to fail, but a life without risks is not possible—so let’s try. Again, and again and again. I’m sure we won’t fail! ✦

Ready to Serve

by Br. Daryl Charron, C.P.P.S., Vietnam Mission Director

On the morning of April 7, 2018, four Missionaries of the Precious Blood in the Vietnam Mission promised fidelity to our Congregation. It caused me great joy to hand out mission crosses to each of these men as they promised to live the bond of charity for the rest of their lives. It was both reassuring and reaffirming to witness this, having been a part of their formation these past few years. Diep, Ky, Hao and Hoa were truly ready to take on this lifelong commitment.

What especially impresses me about these new missionaries is their willingness and availability to serve. I recall one of them saying to me, “I will go wherever you want to send me with the help of God.” Those are the kind of words mission directors love to hear. I admire such openness to the opportunities of the future, whatever they may be. It is crucial to have such an attitude as each of us in the Vietnam Mission take to heart the suggestions for improvement given to us recently by both the Moderator General and the Provincial Director after their visitations to the Vietnam Mission.

These young missionaries show a lot of potential, especially in their teaching abilities and service among the poor in rural Vietnam. I know it is not easy for them to leave some of the comforts of the big city in order to take on the challenges of living the simple life of the countryside. Those of us in the Vietnam Mission are grateful for the opportunity to serve in such a way, for example, in our new mission at Tan Thanh. This is only just a beginning for these young men as they continue to sharpen their pastoral skills in serving the people of this area.

Those of us who have been in our Community for many years can do well do pause for a moment and remember our own commitment to the Congregation and appreciate the availability of our new members. This spirit of openness is reflected in the words of our founder St. Gaspar, who said, “We shall go wherever God wishes and if God so wishes. I am hopeful.” Gaspar cared deeply for the seminarians of his time as they prepared to carry out the mission of the Congregation he helped form with his early members.



Hoa Vu, Hao Pham, Ky Phung, Diep Vu

Gaspar’s care for seminarians is obvious in his letter to Fr. Raffaele Rosati, to whom he wrote, “I kept thinking about your placement in such a way that, with greater possibilities, you would be able to cultivate better the talents given to you by God. From this you will realize that I would like to have you well-informed for the purposes of our Institute and, in time, for the extension of our apostolate.” As Diep, Ky, Hao and Hoa anticipate receiving their own official placements from the Provincial, may they take to heart these words of Gaspar as they cultivate their talents and look at the greater possibilities of their ministries.

We can only imagine what Gaspar’s response would be to one of our missionaries in the Vietnam Mission who said that he would go anywhere. I believe that it would fill him with joy to see such a willingness to serve the people of God. This is evident in his letter to Fr. Mattia Cardillo, to whom he wrote, “I praise greatly your holy conformity to the will of God to go anywhere. This is a true characteristic of an apostolic person. May the Lord ever increase in you the zeal for his glory.”

That is the same prayer I have today for Diep, Ky, Hao and Hoa. May they always conform their wills to God and foster a zeal for His glory. ✠

By Any Other Standards

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

I am often asked what keeps me going. “How do you keep from burning out?” While my answer includes having a good team and celebrating the little moments, I always end by saying that ultimately it is because I embrace a spirituality that holds both the suffering of the cross and the joy of the resurrection. Death does not have the final word. Life overwhelms death, not by eliminating it, but by outlasting it.

The post-resurrection stories that we heard in scripture during the Sundays of Easter, allow us to experience a Jesus who returns to his disciples after the crucifixion and resurrection. He returns with his wounds still very visible. Then he embraces the disciples with words of peace and calls them to go out and proclaim the message of life. Likewise, Jesus calls us to proclaim a message of hope without glossing over the pain and death that is so much a part of life.

Sammy is a young man who goes to school, plays basketball and football, and brings home decent grades. He doesn't cause serious problems; he appears to be the typical 17-year-old. He is respectful and asks for very little. By any other standards, he is just doing what most high school juniors ought to do—go to school, get some decent grades, and prepare for adulthood.

However, while Sammy might seem like an ordinary teenager, he has had to negotiate a path that most of us cannot even imagine. His older brother was killed a year ago, he has another brother who just received 30 years in prison, his mother suffers from lupus and is in and out of the hospital. Sammy realized that if he stayed in that environment, he wouldn't make it. He knew that as hard as he might try, the pressure and strain might very well get the best of him. He had witnessed his older brothers gradually slipping into the streets. He wanted something different.

Several years ago, Sammy was part of our summer program and was a good student who loved basketball. His eighth-grade teacher, Mrs. Barnes, who was also the mother of his best friend, saw so much potential in Sammy but feared for his future. As high school loomed, a plan was made that he would stay with the

Barnes family during the week and attend a Catholic high school. With the support of PBMR and the blessing of his mother, Sammy moved into the home of Mrs. “B.”

Sammy has flourished. He met the challenges of a more structured and demanding home and high school with determination and hard work. He now plays basketball and football and by all accounts is doing well.

Even though Sammy is doing well, he bears the scars of losing his brothers to death and incarceration; he carries the trauma of growing up in an environment of addiction and violence. His wounds, while not visible to all, are still very real.

While we celebrate the resurrection with shouts of alleluia, let us not miss the scars that life often carries. Our spirituality teaches us that by touching our woundedness and the woundedness of others, we become a new creation.

Everyone carries the pain and disappointments of life. It may be the death of a child, a divorce, or the loss of work. “Spirituality, in its best sense, is what you do with that pain and suffering” (Richard Rohr).

In the end, I am still here after many years because of a spirituality that embraces the totality of the human experience. As we stand alongside those who suffer, we also witness to what is possible—transformation and hope! ✦

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Missionaries of the Precious Blood



Cincinnati Province

cpps-preciousblood.org

vocation@cpps-preciousblood.org



Kansas City Province

preciousbloodkc.org

vocations@preciousbloodkc.org

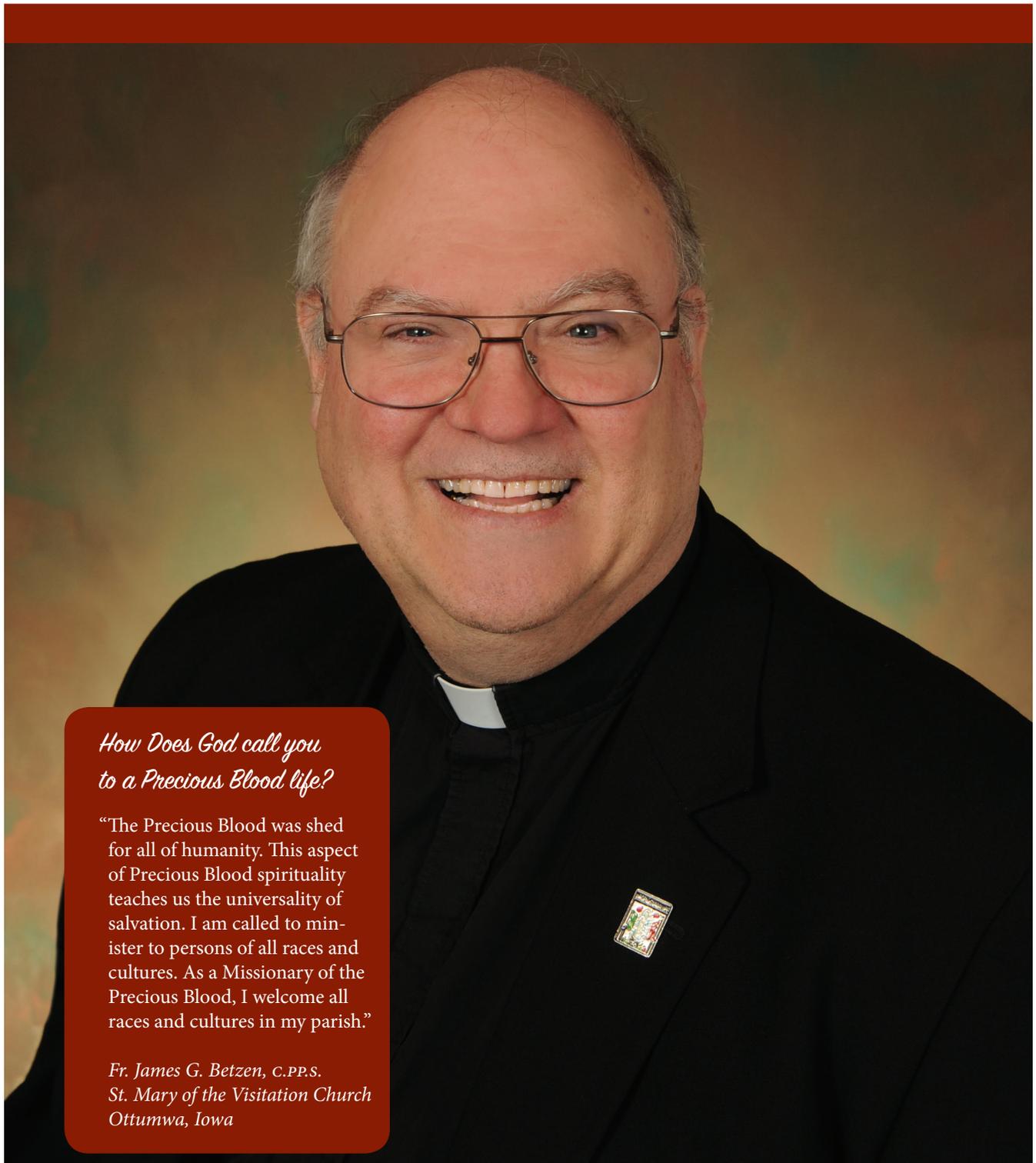
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*Fr. James G. Betzen, C.P.P.S.
St. Mary of the Visitation Church
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