



THE NEW WINE PRESS

Motivated by the Spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

Volume 18 No. 6
June–July 2009



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MY BLOOD IS TRUE DRINK

Alan Hartway, C.P.P.S.

Because the gospel of Mark is the shortest, later this summer the lectionary offers us John 6 over the course of five Sundays beginning on July 26th. This chapter begins with two well known incidents in the life of Jesus, the blessing and distribution of the loaves and fish and the walking on the water; the greater portion of the chapter is then traditionally called the *Bread of Life Discourse*. It is in the discourse that Jesus three times extends the invitation to “drink my blood” and once declares that “my blood is true drink.”

The occasion of these lectionary readings is a rich opportunity to explore elements of our Precious Blood spirituality over the course of these Sundays—and the complementary first and second readings (cf. chart, p. 11) support our inquiry and reflection. First, it may be best to read in advance, several times, the whole of John 6, using *lectio divina*. We can invite our congregations to do the same thing with us.

The lectionary leaves out the nine verses describing the walking on the water incident (6:16-24), five verses of the discourse when Jesus speaks about his relationship to the Father (6:36-40), a single verse observing that the discourse was delivered in the synagogue (6:59), and the two last verses of the chapter referencing Judas’ betrayal. It feels as if these are so well known that they can be referenced if needed. Actually they are integral to the action and teachings of the chapter.

We find ourselves like the crowds who came out to hear Jesus at the seashore and in the synagogue. These two locations might well symbolize hearing Jesus in the world and hearing Jesus in the liturgy. We notice that we listen “out there in the world” quite differently than the way we listen “in the pews.” We are not told of the exact content of his teaching “in the world” at the seashore, only that the crowds came because of the signs of healing.

One doesn’t have to reach very far to grasp the many levels of healing we need in our world today. Jesus was doing something new, outside of their ordinary lives, and they were drawn to him. He met their very human needs. Our needs arise in the midst of the world and our experiences of hungers and thirsts, our crossings and passages, our questions and challenges, and our invitation to discipleship and leadership.



“Our needs arise in the midst of the world and our experiences of hungers and thirsts, our crossings and passages, our questions and challenges, and our invitation to discipleship and leadership.”

See True Drink, continued on page 10...

LISTEN THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE

Garry Richmeier, C.P.P.S.

Often when people come to me in my role as a therapist, they tell me all the reasons they are “screwed up.” Or they tell me that their spouse is screwed up. Or they tell me that their kids are screwed up. Of course I would never agree with them because being “screwed up” means the person is broken and does not have the wherewithal to make changes. And I don’t believe that. But I will listen to their view for as long as it takes, because I know that it is my listening that is absolutely necessary to create a relationship of understanding and trust. Only with such a relationship can the client and I find a way to deal with problems and effect change. So I listen. A lot.

President Obama recently spoke at the graduation ceremony for Notre Dame University. Some people criticized Notre Dame for inviting the president because of his stance on abortion. They seemed to equate listening to him with agreeing with him. They seemed to see no other value in the listening itself.

If we cannot listen to someone with whom we disagree on something, we will be listening to no one, because we do not agree fully with anyone. If we cannot commend someone for something because we disagree with them on another issue, we will be commending no one.

Ideally, listening is a valuable tool that helps us communicate and live and work together in peace despite our differences. As the world has become more and more polarized, listening to the “other side” is often seen as a betrayal of one’s own camp.

Examples abound. When President Obama said he would be open to talks (listening) with Hugo Chavez of Argentina or with Iran’s leader, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, political cartoons soon appeared depicting Obama in bed with them. The implication was that by listening, he would agree with all their views and behaviors as leaders.

Many leaders in the church these days attempt to correct members who have different views, but will not enter into genuine dialogue (listening) with them. In the church’s view this would weaken the church’s authority and create confusion among the faithful. Since 9-11 it has been an oft-repeated refrain that reasoning (listening) with terrorists is impossible, and any attempt to do so would be a betrayal of our country.

We have almost painted ourselves into a corner regarding international relations. For the last eight years we have basically told other countries what to do and have done little listening. As a result, our relationships with them have suffered, trust has been eroded, and the lines of communication have been severely damaged. So now that we desperately need to have discussions with North Korea about their

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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.

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Printed on recycled paper by
Trojan Press of North Kansas City

nuclear weapons, we are at a loss. This is because for years we have not been cultivating a relationship with them (e.g. listening to them) which would be conducive to communication, understanding, and trust. There is now more and more talk of resorting to military action since we are unable to communicate effectively.

The ministry of listening is sorely needed in our world today, and to paraphrase a familiar quote, "Listening begins at home."

The Leadership Team has been trying to make listening more a part of the work of the Province. The shift to the use of the term "Leadership Team" rather than "Provincial Council" implies a deeper commitment to listening to each other on the team when making decisions. We are sharing the work of official visitations of our members and Companions so we can more quickly hear from everyone.

Each member of the Leadership Team is a liaison to several province committees and offices, in order to facilitate better communication—of which listening is a vital part. We convened the parish summit a year and a half ago in order to listen to the collective wisdom of members who are pastors and associates. Around the same time a representative group was gathered to envision the province's future. What we heard at that meeting has been guiding us in decision-making on the leadership level. The decision to promote Circle Training at our Assembly was prompted by the importance we place on listening. Hopefully this listening tool can help us discuss important issues for us as a community.

None of us listens perfectly, including those in leadership. We are all especially susceptible to becoming defensive, angry or self-righteous when someone disagrees with us. This results in our closing our ears and our minds to anything the other has to offer. This in turn separates us from each other and precludes working together to solve problems. On the other hand, listening helps create relationships of trust and understanding, which are the foundation of any group hoping to be effective or life-giving.



*"We do not listen
to each other
to state, force,
or feign agreement.
We listen to each other
because it enables us
to live together
in peace and love."*

See *Listen*, continued on page 19...

LOOKING AHEAD

July 19–25

International Meeting on Mission
Salzburg, Austria

August 16

Feast of the Assumption Celebration
Gaspar Mission House, Kansas City, MO
4:00 P.M.

August 20–21 or August 21–22

Precious Blood Ministry of Justice Workshop
"A Place at the Table"
Marillac Center, Leavenworth KS

October 3–4

Companion Retreat
with Bishop Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S.
"Our Call to Holiness"
Marillac Center, Leavenworth KS

October 15–18

Precious Blood Leadership Conference
O'Fallon MO

October 24–25

Companion Retreat
with Bishop Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S.
"Our Call to Holiness"
Maria Stein OH

April 12–14

2010 Provincial Assembly
Church of the Annunciation
Kearney MO

July 26–29, 2010

Precious Blood Convocation
St. Louis University, St. Louis MO

WWW.KCPROVINCE.ORG

We invite you to visit our website where you will find back issues of *The New Wine Press* as well as our weekly newsletter, *The Weekly Wine Press*. Also just posted is the latest issue of *The Wine Cellar*, which has recently resumed publication.

CIRCLE REFLECTIONS

Marie Trout

When our children were younger, friends of ours had a home at a nearby lake where we were often invited to spend a weekend with them. One of the highlights of the weekends happened in the evenings after it was dark enough to start a fire. There was a ritual to this. You did not just put a match to some wood. There was a fire ring and wood was stacked in such a way as to produce a roaring fire. Kindling and old paper were brought down to help things get started. There was a fire stick and the keeper of the fire would adjust logs as the fire burned. You had to be taught the correct way to tend the fire so you would not scatter burning logs every which way.

There was much ritual about this, but the most important thing was that this was called a truth fire. All were invited to share and tell stories. Sometimes there were directed questions like “What is the funniest thing you have ever seen? or What is your favorite song?” Conversation went around the circle and young and old all shared their stories. As the fire collapsed to white embers we all felt safe, and we left knowing each other better and understanding a little more about those gathered around the fire.

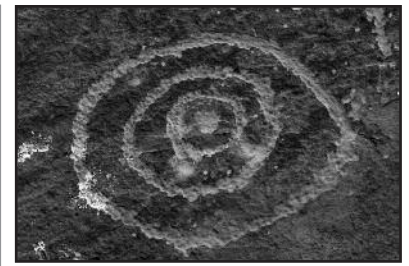
I recently experienced something similar when I participated in the Circle Training offered by the Kansas City Province. There was no fire, but we did sit in a circle and there was much ritual and storytelling—and most of all relationship building.

The Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation in Chicago offers this opportunity. This training was facilitated by Frs. David Kelly and Bill Nordenbrock from the PBMR who led us through the Circle Process. They had previously given all of us a preview of this process at the Kansas City Province Assembly in April, and twelve companions and members signed up for and participated in the four day training in June.

Circles are part of the Native American tradition, a people who gathered around the fire and passed a talking piece in order to speak about important issues. This present process has honored that tradition and developed it into a method that can readily be used in many situations.

Circles offer Freedom. Freedom to speak in a safe environment. Freedom to have the time to truly listen to those present. Freedom to communicate who you really are by sharing your story. Circles are a way of bringing people together where all are

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Native American petroglyph

respected and everyone gets a opportunity to talk without interruption. All participants explain themselves by telling their stories and everyone is equal. No person is more important than anyone else.

Circles can also be useful whenever two or more people need to make decisions together, or have a disagreement, or need to address an experience that resulted in harm to someone. They can be helpful when people want to work together as a team, to celebrate, to share difficulties or to learn from each other.

All circles have at least one circle keeper who maintains the movement and flow. However, all in the circle are responsible for the health of the circle, since it is an experience of community where everyone gathered is important and valued. Circles are strong enough to hold anger, frustration, joy, truth, pain, silence and many other feelings and emotions.

Just as with the truth fire at the lake there is much preparation on the part of the trained circle keepers and there is much ritual as well. Rituals that invite those gathered to share of themselves, rituals that invite community building and deepen relationships.

Circle, continued on page 7...

THE MOTIVATION OF ART

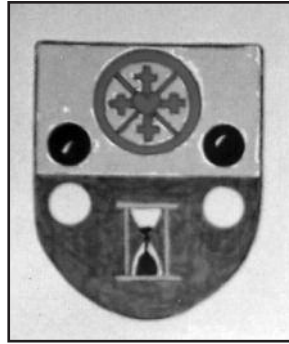
Daryl Charron, C.P.P.S.

This past year I received a gift from Fr. Tom Conway which I have grown to cherish day by day. It is a framed coat of arms which attempts to explain the significance of my name and what I represent. Among other symbols displayed in this piece of art is an hour glass emblematic of the flight of time and human mortality.

Fr. Tom says this is a symbol of my hospice ministry of being devoted to the waning days and hours of those who are terminally ill. I have found it to be inspirational, and furthermore it has made me more curious about the significance of one's name as it relates to one's identity. This is especially important in Native American spirituality in the naming of offspring.

Recently, one of my clients, whom I provide with ongoing grief support, pointed out further significance to my surname. In Greek mythology, Charon was the ferryman of Hades who carried souls of the newly deceased across the river that divided the world of the living from the world of the dead. Scenes of the dead boarding Charon's boat are displayed quite often in the art of ancient Greece. Charon looks like a rough, unkempt, Athenian seaman holding his ferryman's pole in his right hand and using his left hand to receive the deceased. The word Charon may be a euphemism for death—much like the "grim reaper." This all may sound a bit morbid. Nevertheless, death and dying is a fascinating topic in which I take much interest.

I believe St. Gaspar also had a great interest in the topic, made obvious through his great example and his writings. Early in his life, Gaspar showed much concern for the sick. He spent his summer vacations as a youth visiting hospitals. I wonder if this had a lot to do with his being deathly ill at different times in his young



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life. It made him more empathetic towards the dying and preoccupied with being ready to be called to eternal life. For example, he wrote to Fr. Bellisario Cristaldi in Letter 1433, “I want to be united with God and to prepare myself for the eternal years.”

This to a large extent is part of the spiritual journey for those in hospice. When I gaze at images of Gaspar in various art forms, I am motivated by this aspect of his personality and want to imitate it in my apostolate. It inspires me to share stories of ministry and vice versa with my housemate, Br. Robert Herman, who is also engaged in a similar ministry.

As you can see, a coat of arms or any piece of art can inspire you to do good work. Thanks to Companion Claire Ann Wheeler, the residents of Schaefer Mission House can admire the statue of St. Gaspar which for many years stood at Rainbow Lodge Retreat Center in Seneca, South Dakota. We look at it daily as we pass by and remember

Companion Ralph Wheeler with gratitude for the many good years he offered in service as a brother and companion in



our congregation. It makes it that much more meaningful when Fr. Mike Goode, Br. Robert Herman and myself gather for community prayer and look over at the statue of St. Gaspar as we pray for his intercession for the grace of a happy death—and the strength to carry out our apostolates in the meantime.

Br. Daryl Charron works with Catholic Community Hospice in Kansas City, KS.

SUMMER HAPPENINGS

Chris Hoyt

A warm breeze swept us far across the plains this summer, from the choppy waters of the breathtaking Pacific Ocean, to the serene farmlands near Maria Stein and Carthage in Ohio. With the bustling excitement of the season, we enthusiastically forged ahead in the collaborative design of our lay program, and eagerly anticipate recruiting our first class of volunteers in the fall of 2010.

The sunny month of May took us on an exploratory journey westward to California's Bay Area. Evaluating Sonnino House in the heart of Berkeley as a living site was first on our to-do list. This home to members of the Kansas City Province is ideally located just minutes from Oakland, in a vibrantly diverse college town. Fr. David Matz played the gracious host in their newly remodeled house, which boasts ample space not only for members but volunteers as well.

With endless need abounding in the nearby Oakland area, Sonnino House can serve wonderfully as a living site for volunteers suited to address the concerns of the local community. A beautiful 2nd floor chapel offers lay missionaries a space for daily prayer, and the friendly home oozes with the trademark Precious Blood community and hospitality.

As we set out on a fact-finding mission for local ministry opportunities, we needed look no further than our remarkable Alameda and Newark Companions. We met on a cool evening at Sonnino House for the monthly gathering and a presentation of the Volunteer Program. With combined decades of ministry experience in nearly every corner of the Bay Area, they shared from their vast experience in dozens of local outreach programs, including HIV/AIDS care, shelters for the abused, soup kitchens, parish work, and transitional programs for women and children. Wide smiles, warm hugs, and a sense of loving and prayerful



“Wide smiles, warm hugs, and a sense of loving and prayerful support emanated as we parted ways that evening, recognizing that together our hands stretched over immense geographical distances to shape an important part of our community’s future.”

support emanated as we parted ways that evening, recognizing that together our hands stretched over immense geographical distances to shape an important part of our community's future.

Catholic Charities of the East Bay alerted us to their most recent efforts in serving the Oakland community, and expressed great interest in supporting our program. When we described the mission and goals of the community, Catholic Charities considered creating a position for a Precious Blood volunteer on its staff. In this full-time, immersive opportunity, a volunteer would oversee and collaborate with eleven local parish teams which minister to families identified by economic, housing, or health need. This dynamic opportunity, combined with those ministries outlined by our Companions, opened doors to exciting potential options for the program's future in the Bay Area.

A speedy jaunt due south landed us in the sprawling metropolis of Los Angeles. There, the urban center bursts with a unique cultural and ethnic blend, teeming with colorful and lively homes, people, and customs. On a two-block stroll to the grocery store, you are likely to hear at least three languages spoken before arriving at the checkout line.

In the heart of it all sits St. Agnes Parish, mere minutes from downtown Los Angeles and the University of Southern California's campus. As we ate carne asada tacos prepared by the local Boy Scouts, Fr. Bill Delaney greeted Korean members of the congregation on their way out of Sunday mass. Only minutes after, the giant church was filled to the brim with St. Agnes' Spanish-speaking community, which took a break from manning the taco, burrito, and snow cone tents outside.

The scene was reminiscent of grammar school recess: friends visiting, slaps on the back, laughter, palpable excitement, and the safety of



community. The children playing hide-and-go seek in St. Agnes grade school next door may have heightened the experience. As Principal Kevin Dempsey suggests, his school would be an ideal placement for a Precious Blood volunteer. With openings in the art, music, and physical education departments, a candidate could work both with students and parents, offering ESL and computer training in the evenings.

Outreach programs in the parish—which is staffed by both Kansas City and Cincinnati Province members—would round out the experience and allow for a truly communal year of immersion. The delightful visit inspired new beginnings for the program, and we remain hopeful that St. Agnes Parish will welcome volunteers into their already vibrant community.

The still, green fields of northern Ohio offered a welcome change from the get-up-and-go lifestyle of the west coast. As Cincinnati Province members and Companions gathered at Maria Stein for their annual assembly, we thanked



“The still, green fields of northern Ohio offered a welcome change from the get-up-and-go lifestyle of the west coast.”

Provincial Fr. Angelo Anthony for the opportunity to present our ministry’s report on the final day. Amid the excitement of a new member’s definitive incorporation at St. Charles the evening before, the province was receptive and supportive of our recent efforts, with several members offering leads for ministry sites and recruitment opportunities. Our hope to build the Volunteer Program in a corporate effort continues to be a top priority, and we are most grateful to the Cincinnati Province for its hospitality.

Although we have only just begun to bask in the summer sun, we are mindful that fall is around the corner. Colleges and universities will host volunteer fairs and educate their student bodies about post-graduate service opportunities. We are now in the process of designing publication materials for distribution in institutions of higher learning, as well as Precious Blood parishes and Companion groups.

These recent travels played a significant role in determining volunteer sites for the 2010 season, and we look forward to bringing those qualities of community we hold dearest to our first class of Precious Blood volunteers. Sincere thanks to gracious hosts, knowledgeable tour guides, and new friends made along the journey. Best summer wishes from Kansas City!

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

Circle, continued from page 4...

I am grateful for the opportunity to learn this method. I can see many ways it can be incorporated into my ministry and can improve communication. I would be happy to share with Companion groups about the process and encourage anyone to take the training. It can only deepen any situation you bring it to and enrich those you minister to and with.

This poem by Meir Carasso, titled *The Same*, from *The Little Book of Circle Processes* best shares my feeling.

This is a time
Doing
is split off from
Knowing,
and Being
is
hardly at all.

But here and there
on this side of the horizon,
people meet in sacred circles
to form communities
and speak their hearts
that seek the same.

*Marie Trout is the Kansas City Province
Director of Companions.*

ANCESTRAL GRACE

Mark Miller, C.P.P.S.

I recently finished reading the book *Ancestral Grace, Meeting God in our Human Story*, written by Diarmuid O’Murchu, published by Orbis Books.

This book confronts many of the constructs of God, evolution, grace and sin which we in the Western world seem to have adopted. If your mind is convinced that there is no other way to see God or understand the human relationship to the rest of creation; if you see no other possibility of how all of life has a common source other than how you have always understood it, please do not read this book.

The author relies heavily on the science of paleoanthropologists, but there are constant connections to how we have understood Scripture and interpreted the events of history. He describes “ancestral grace” as that “divine creativity which has been at work at every stage of our evolutionary becoming.” However, he wishes to include the last 7 million years rather than the last 2500 years. He believes “our authentic humanity can be retrieved and reclaimed only when we choose to work with our entire story and not merely with its evolution in more recent millennia.”

The first part of the book looks upon the human as human. The author speaks of how we wish to understand our ancestors while at the same time being quite selective about which ancestors we claim as the prototype model for our lives. I offer a caution. If one cannot perceive the divine creativity, ancestral grace, in all of the developments of humankind, one will be unable to embrace his thought processes.

He points out that most of the research regarding our primate origins is on chimpanzees, which are by nature, violent and highly competitive, and operate primarily along patriarchal lines and norms. However, there is another primate source in the bonobos. These apes express cooperation rather than competition, peace-loving rather than violence, and a strong matriarchal leadership.

The question arises, why do we know so much about the chimpanzees and so little about the bonobos? Is it a conscious or unconscious way to justify our comfortableness with violence and

competition at the expense of others? How have we as the human species grown so comfortable with a propensity for violence?

There are others such as René Girard and Gil Baile who have written on this subject from a religious perspective, as in Baile’s book, *Violence Unveiled*. But solely from a human



Nine-Mile Canyon, Northern Utah

perspective, O’Murchu indicates that part of the reason for the violence is that we have failed to see our connection to all of life. As Michael Dowd states: “The move from seeing ourselves as separate beings placed on earth (the world is made for us) to seeing ourselves as self-reflective expression of Earth (we were made for the world) is an immense transformation in human identity.”

As a modern expression of this failure to see or embrace this common origin, O’Murchu cites what is happening in Africa. Here in the birthplace of the human race, “the whole spiritual story of our species belongs more to Africa than to any other part of planet earth. Yet today Africa is the most tortured part of the Gaia Planet. It is in our collective interest that we try to resolve the plight of Africa nations today. The call to such engagement is not about charity—for refugees, AIDS sufferers, war victims, starving children—but rather about justice.” The enduring gift of ancestral grace is still at our disposal.

The author believes that when we look at the shorter span—some 5,000 years—we end up with conclusions such as what Girard and others have proposed. However, if we look at the larger scale—1-7 million years—“we witness creatures who are beneficiaries of ‘an original blessing’ and not victims of ‘an original sin.’” He goes on to

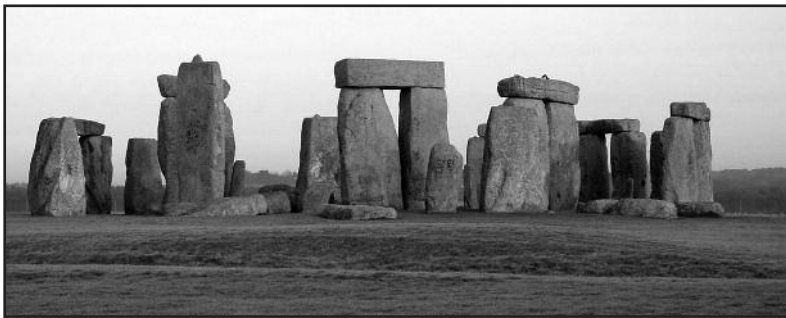
“The move from seeing ourselves as separate beings placed on earth (the world is made for us) to seeing ourselves as self-reflective expression of Earth (we were made for the world) is an immense transformation in human identity.”

say, “one of the consequences of freedom is that we will get it wrong from time to time, and I suspect that is not a problem for the divine Creator.”

Moving from one period of discovery to another in terms of the evolution of humankind, O’Murchu indicates how each millennium brought a new awareness in creativity moving from art to music to making more complex tools for further development. The challenge for today as described by O’Murchu is “realignment.” He believes “robust individualism is our great sin, cultural isolation is our curse. We are programmed for intelligent cooperation, not for individualistic competition. But ancestral grace never gives up.”

He traces the human development from Africa through other cultures and then codified by the Western world and concludes with a final statement: “Having danced our religion for thousands of years and chanted our praises to the great enveloping mystery, we now began to voice our prayer in a more verbal way.”

O’Murchu closes the first part of his book by reflecting on the results of agriculture replacing hunters: “Now the land was seen as a commodity, an object to be fought over and used to foment the patriarchal philosophy of divide and conquer.” With agriculture



Stonehenge, England

and the domestication of animals, various diseases now began to infiltrate the world as well. With this new evolutionary development, we lost our sense of interconnectedness and have begun to see the world as something to be renounced and even evil, rather than seeing ourselves as a member of that world. This has been validated by most religions as well.

The second part of his book treats Jesus and the human as Christian which, I will reflect on in the next issue.

Fr. Mark Miller, along with Fr. Joe Uecker, serves the parishes of St. Joseph and St. Anthony in Odessa, TX

PRAYER FOR THE 2010 CONVOCATION

Eternal God,
we offer you the Precious Blood of Jesus,
for our sisters and brothers
who gather for our Precious Blood Convocation.
Accept us as disciples of your son, Jesus.
Deepen our understanding
of the theology of the cross and resurrection,
which shapes us as your children and brings us life.
Move us to witness to our faith
in the Precious Blood of Jesus,
by actions which lift up reconciliation,
center on the poor and displaced of our world,
provide for the immigrant,
counsel the sorrowful
and bring your Church the unity and courage it needs
to live in our world today.
Help us to embrace
the anguish of our world and our Church
with the redeeming love of Christ,
which conquers all things, even despair and death.
Let us join with our ancestors,
with Maria De Mattias,
Gaspar del Bufalo,
Maria Anna Brunner,
Theresa Weber
and Francis Pfanner,
in proclaiming the Precious Blood of Jesus
to a world in need of redemption.
Our communities are places of friendship and support,
of prayer and study, of action and witness.
Send your grace to all our Precious Blood congregations.
May the Holy Spirit rouse us to be your witnesses,
set our direction, lighten our burdens,
refresh us with your presence,
and empower us to proclaim your Kingdom.
Bless our Convocation with joy and energy,
with purpose and wisdom,
and with hope and promise.
May it be a moment of grace for our Church
and our congregations.
We can be your disciples today.
We must proclaim the Precious Blood to our neighbors.
We will sacrifice our lives for the sake of your Kingdom.
Amen.

True Drink, continued from page 1...

John's careful note about the command to be ordered in sitting and the abundance of green grass creates an almost eschatological scene of the paradise of God's reign. A multitude is all getting along with each other.

These readings facilitate a way to a critical and contemplative thinking about our experiences. We have the same experiences and needs; each of these can be made vivid through a well chosen story that focuses our contemporary situation and brings us into the text. The homiletic task is making the gospel narrative and the teaching of the discourse accessible for today. In this way, the text then gets brought into us.

Some homiletic commentaries in recent years have suggested a completely alternative view of the bread and fish narrative, and the manner in which Jesus breaks down the barriers of ritual purity by having everyone share what they brought with them. Traditionally, the story follows a number of Old Testament stories about God's abundance in feeding and loving the people, stories which would have been familiar to the crowds. They are represented in the first readings of these six Sundays and culminate in the first reading on the last Sunday of this cycle with the covenant renewal at Shechem. These Old Testament readings suggest a direction that the Church might go in understanding the background, the meaning or the prophetic part of the Gospel for the week.

The distribution of the loaves and fish was given the role of prefiguring the Eucharist and to some extent has received a sacramental interpretation. The emphasis frequently is on the multiplication of loaves and fishes and the miraculous elements. Only the modern editors add this sort of language in the headings to the narrative; the original texts in the

Greek or Vulgate do not use either of these words. The Greek uses the language of *distribution*. This distribution complements and is fulfilled in the gathering up of the fragments, "so that nothing will be wasted." These two actions of distribution and gathering are experienced by the people and are the work of the disciples as servant leaders. In a moment I want to develop these actions in light of our charism of reconciliation.

Note that when the crowds do find Jesus and begin their inquiry, Jesus challenges their emphasis on the miraculous feeding. For him the focus is on the reality of real food and drink—flesh and blood—and the reality of life. In other words, religion cannot be a sort of magic in which God takes care of everything for us, like making bears materialize in the woods when we are out sightseeing. Life isn't all about a pursuit of happiness, but it is about being real flesh and blood. This, too, means that there is a facing of suffering and the broken parts of life.



“Jesus challenges their emphasis on the miraculous feeding. For him the focus is on the reality of real food and drink—flesh and blood—and the reality of life.... Life isn't all about a pursuit of happiness, but it is about being real flesh and blood. This, too, means that there is a facing of suffering and the broken parts of life.”

St. John tells us right from the beginning that the whole chapter's material is in the context of the Passover proximity. This is important because it informs how John uses the material he received and shows us his lens for understanding the discourse of Jesus. Blessing, breaking, distributing are not only the fundamental actions of Jesus in Eucharist, but they are also the way John connects this action with the cross. Jesus is himself the blessing, breaking, and pouring out for us. Scripture scholar Raymond Brown makes the observation that for John, the emphasis is on the purpose of the sacraments/signs, not just in the sacraments themselves. So the purpose of bread from heaven as real flesh and blood, which Jesus repeats three times, isn't at all about any miracle or multiplication. The reality is that just as Jesus is blessing, broken and distributed, so too with our lives. In any event, nowhere in Eucharistic theology does any discussion of multiplication occur. The presentation of the Eucharist in the theological tradition is all about what and who Jesus is and that he has done something

entirely new. A multiplication doesn't result in any new creation, just more of what is already there. To paraphrase Brown, the life of this body and blood arise out of the suffering and death of the Lord. So it is also with us.

The Catechism does not dwell on this gospel only insofar as it considers it a prefiguration, and that is of our human transformation. God is making something new. It goes on to say that this distribution of the bread is related to the wedding at Cana, where the new wine of the reign of God is distributed to all the guests.

Initially a miracle of multiplication is easier and more comfortable for us. Like the crowds who seek Jesus because of his signs, we are confronted by Jesus with eternal life—which is very different from immortality, just more of this life forever. Eternal life is something entirely new.

A careful reading of the Gospel reveals a kind of unfolding drama between the crowds and Jesus that John describes subtly. They move the conversation from inquiry and listening to Jesus' teachings (vss. 25-34), to murmuring (vss. 41-51)—a stronger word reminiscent of the people in the desert of Exodus—to outright quarrelling (vss. 52-71). For some, this progression of resistance will result in their merely walking away and returning to their old lives; for others it will result as with Judas (vss. 70-71) in outright betrayal, and for some, a commitment to faith and discipleship, as Peter does in vs. 68-69.



Jesus is aware of just how shocking this is; reconciliation is one of the most challenging things we do in life, and one we often resist because it involves our real flesh and blood and does not allow us to go unchanged.

How often do we find ourselves in one of these stages as a Church? When inquiry leads us to faith, we become this new people. In this way, God's presence transforms patterns of living. The stories to tell these Sundays are about these transformations in our lived experiences, in order to connect my little story with the big story of the Gospel.

Furthermore, from a Precious Blood missionary perspective, in our attention to our human condition, we know that it is our murmuring and our quarreling that call us to reconciliation. Reconciliation is about being together, both victims and perpetrators, as a new creation.

This is why John invites us to eat and drink. They are not spiritual actions alone, but real human actions. John emphasizes this reality in calling the bread/flesh and the wine/blood "true food" and "true drink." It is this reality that makes us most human, something the original readers could hear more clearly in John's choice of words for food.

The themes that emerge from the readings for these late summer weeks then are about our humanity in intimacy and communion, about God's power and presence, and about covenant and commitment. The ecclesial readings from Ephesians help to bridge the discourse on the bread of life into the very real life of the church where flesh and blood is not always perfect but striving to become this new creation Jesus speaks about in himself.

Fr. Alan Hartway is on the faculty of Naropa University in Boulder, CO.

**LECTIONARY FOR JOHN 6
THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE LOAVES & DISCOURSE ON THE BREAD OF LIFE**

	1st Reading	2nd Reading	Gospel
Ordinary Time 17B July 26	II Kings 4, 42-44 <i>Elisha feeds a crowd</i>	Ephesians 4, 1-6 <i>On love and unity</i>	John 6, 1-15 <i>Distribution of loaves and fish to crowd</i>
Ordinary Time 18B August 2	Exodus 16, 2-4. 12-15 <i>Manna in the desert</i>	Ephesians 4, 17. 20-24 <i>Putting on new self</i>	John 6, 24-35 <i>Request of the crowd and Jesus' first answer</i>
Ordinary Time 19B August 9	I Kings 19, 4-8 <i>Elijah fed in desert</i>	Ephesians 4, 30 – 5,2 <i>Imitating Christ's love</i>	John 6, 41-51 <i>Murmuring of the crowd and Jesus' second answer</i>
Ordinary Time 20B August 16	Proverbs 9, 1-6 <i>Wisdom builds her house</i>	Ephesians 5, 15-20 <i>Conduct of the community</i>	John 6, 51-58 <i>Quarreling of the crowd and Jesus' third answer</i>
Ordinary Time 21B August 23	Joshua 24, 1-2. 15-17.18 <i>Covenant Renewal</i>	Ephesians 5, 21-32 <i>Church as bride of Christ</i>	John 6, 60-69 <i>Departure of some and Peter's profession of faith</i>

HOW IT WORKS

Fr. Joe Miller, C.P.P.S. & Companion Sharon Crall

We want to share with you the process for someone who is discerning a vocation to our community. The process and the requirements outlined here are followed collaboratively with the Cincinnati Province, as both provinces now have all levels of formation together.

The first step is invitation. The invitation might be extended by the Vocation Office through vocation talks in classrooms, contacts made while visiting parishes, retreats or reflection gatherings, posters or magazine ads. Another avenue could be a member, companion or parishioner who offers an invitation to someone to consider priesthood or brotherhood with our community, and in turn passes the information on to our office. The Vocation Ministry Office then maintains contacts with these individuals.

If a person begins to exhibit more interest, they may be asked if they want someone to accompany them in a discernment period. This time helps the individual listen to what God's call might be for his life. If the person decides he wants to look more closely at our community, he begins a period of inquiry. At this time the inquirer stays in his present living situation and with the aid of a Precious Blood sponsor works through a Discernment Journal. The time involved varies, but ideally lasts no longer than two years. Toward the end of this time, an individual who is interested in continuing to journey with us would seek an application to begin the Initial Formation stage.

The following are the required components of the application process, which leads to entry into Initial Formation. The applicant either has completed or is actively working through the discernment journal with a Vocation Sponsor, is in dialogue with the Director of Vocation Ministry, and seeks out opportunities such as a discernment weekend.

The applicant signs an Informed Consent form (acknowledging that he understands the application process and requirements and that all applications materials become part of a

confidential file), a Legal Release Form (which grants the Missionaries of the Precious Blood permission to selectively release pertinent information to those who will assist in the application process), and the Release Form for Background Investigation. The screening process is completed through the Diocese of Kansas City–St. Joseph.

The applicant completes the application form, provides autobiographical information as noted in the application form and a statement of intention regarding his decision to pursue community life with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Required academic documents and sacramental records are obtained, medical and dental reports are completed, and the applicant supplies two small recent photos of himself.

Five recommendations are also required—from the community sponsor and four other persons who have known the applicant for some time. These may include the pastor, relatives, friends, fellow workers, employers, supervisors, counselor, or other priests or religious who knows the person well. All those who submit recommendations are contacted by the Director of

Vocations Office

Vocation Ministry for a follow-up interview, either by phone or in person. A personal or professional reference form is completed by the Director of Vocation Ministry. The completed application form and all other required documents are sent to the Director of Vocation Ministry.

The Behavioral Assessment interview is conducted by someone trained in the skills and techniques of behavioral assessment. This is an intensive process in which the interviewer walks with the applicant through a review of his life. Topics covered include family of origin, relationships/friendships, educational history, work experiences, sexuality issues, faith, prayer (private and public), self evaluation, and issues particular to the spirit and charism of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. The interview is confidential and data is only shared with the Director of Vocation Ministry and Admissions Committee. A summary of the interview is provided for those who assist in the application process. Additionally, a psychological assessment is conducted by qualified professionals who are acquainted with our community. This includes some psychological instruments, a clinical interview, history, spiritual assessment, and feedback.

After completion, the materials are gathered by the Vocation Office and reviewed by an Admissions Committee (composed of representatives from both Provinces). This committee makes a recommendations to the appropriate Provincial Council, which in turn makes the final decision regarding acceptance.

TWO JOURNEYS

Paul Muller

On June 6th I was ordained to the permanent diaconate by Bishop Robert Finn at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Kansas City, MO. As nervous as I was that morning, I found comfort in looking out and seeing my friends from the Precious Blood community: priests, brothers and fellow companions.

I found it interesting that when I first reflected on my ordination and on being a Precious Blood companion, I felt I was experiencing two parallel journeys. Prior to starting my diaconate formation I became aware of companions. My knowledge of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood was due to my wife Pam and me both attending St. Joseph's College in Rensselaer, IN.

However, companions provided me with a different view of Precious Blood spirituality. I saw how incorporated members and companions responded to those who were in need, or suffering or marginalized. I saw how each person brought their own expression of Precious Blood spirituality to their parish or to a unique ministry for which they were called to serve the Church.

My journey towards ordination started with the Holy Spirit planting a seed within my heart, which grew into the desire to serve the church as a minister of

Paul Muller receives the Book of Gospels during the ordination liturgy.



charity. Listening to my heart I was able to surrender to the will of the Holy Spirit and offer myself as a humble servant to God.

However, the more I reflected on my ordination, what I thought were two parallel journeys were in fact just one. During my formation, these two paths of my life were coming closer to merging into one desire: to serve God. This Precious Blood spirituality I have come to know will help me serve compassionately as a deacon. I believe it makes me more aware of the needs of others and the joy of serving them.

“This Precious Blood spirituality I have come to know will help me serve compassionately as a Deacon. I believe it makes me more aware of the needs of others and the joy of serving them.”

Paul Muller is a Precious Blood companion and a member of Our Lady of the Presentation Parish in Lee's Summit, MO.

In his diaconal ministry he will assist at St. Margaret of Scotland Parish in Lee's Summit and also serve the spiritual and practical needs of widows with children in the Lee's Summit area.

“These men have been chosen to be servants of God's people...have sought to answer God's call with the offering and oblation of their lives.”

“As a minister of charity, the deacon distributes the goods of this world for the hope of God's people, and he does so with a supernatural motive—the love of Jesus Christ. Even more than serving the material needs of the people, the deacon is called to minister to the spiritual hunger and thirst of human souls.”

“As a minister of the Gospel, the hope of the risen Christ must be proclaimed so that the one who is fed and cared for is assured that they are also loved—loved by God, loved by the church, loved for all eternity with a dignity that can never be doubted and which must never be taken away,”

“This great privilege of being chosen and called by God that we celebrate at the time of ordination is not an acclamation of earthly greatness or status. The title deacon, or diakonos, means servant.”

*Bishop Robert Finn,
from his homily*



Hope for the Homeless

Mike Donovan

At 15, Robert sits in jail with the label “Release Upon Request,” but with nowhere to go. Abandoned at birth by his mother, raised for some years by a resentful grandmother, and for some years by a great grandmother who is now too old and feeble to manage him, Robert has been running the streets for the last couple of years, living with friends or with strangers he meets on the streets.



His friend Dwayne, 16, has also been on the run, his parents unemployed, destitute and on drugs, too poor to provide him the basic necessities of life. He flops at several locations, something I witnessed first hand when I drove him to four locations to pick up his dirty clothes to bring to a laundromat for the first time in months.

Anthony, now 20, used to live with his mother, brothers, and sisters, until his Mom lost their apartment, and split the children among other relatives. Anthony has never gotten over the hurt of this separation, and has lived in houses from which drugs are sold for the last two years.

Ronald and Raphael live with their grandmother, but safe passage to school is the real life issue for them, since getting there involves crossing rival gang boundaries. For another young man called “Snowman,” living on the streets means using our Center to shower after another night of homelessness.

These stories are the norm, not the exception. More and more, the youth we encounter at the Juvenile Detention Center, and later at the Precious Blood Center, are homeless and are living in unsafe environments. Our efforts to help them reach their own potential are often thwarted, since their physiological and safety needs go unmet. The hierarchical nature of needs as described by Maslow years ago still applies today. Until these

lower level needs are satisfied, the needs of our youth for esteem and self-actualization take a backseat to the day-to-day issues of survival. Where will I sleep tonight? Can I get to school safely? Mom doesn’t work, and there’s no food in the house.

It hurts to drop off a kid at night, knowing he doesn’t really have a place to stay, as I head back to my comfortable suburban condominium. I cannot imagine the chaos of living without a place to call home.

For the youth we serve, the Precious Blood Center is that haven where they can they feel safe from the violence of the streets, where they can get something to eat, where they can take a shower, if necessary. It’s not home, but our Wednesday night Circles provide a forum for them to share their stories with their

“Precious Blood spirituality gives focus to our mission and ministry in the midst of violence, and at the crossroads, border lines, and divisions of race, culture, and gang affiliation. We live in solidarity with those who suffer as brothers and sisters united in the blood of Christ.”

peers and with our staff. We accept the young people in our Making Choices Program as they are, not where we want them to be, or what we want them to become. It makes for a lot of disappointment and heartaches along the way, as we see them struggle with staying on the right track.

Precious Blood spirituality gives focus to our mission and ministry in the midst of violence, and at the crossroads, border lines, and divisions of race, culture, and gang affiliation. We live in solidarity with those who suffer as brothers and sisters united in the blood of Christ. We continue our ministry because no one should be known by the name “homeless.”

Mike Donovan is on the staff of the PBMR.

You are my Brother and my Sister

Dave Kelly, C.P.P.S.

“Hey, Fr. Kelly, you still going to come and see me before I leave for the County Jail?” He was not so much wondering whether I, too, would forget about him, as he was needing to talk to someone. He was going to turn seventeen on Sunday and would be shipped to Cook County Jail that very day. He is a young man who has already been locked up for two years in Cook County Juvenile Detention Center—one of about 90 youth (out of a population of 400) who sit in Juvenile Detention Center being held as adults, because they are too young to be put in Cook County Jail. On the day they turn seventeen, they are transferred to the adult facility.

He is small in stature and the thought of being housed with adults was something that he worried about. As much as he tried to hold them back, tears ran down his face as he spoke of being transferred to the Cook County Jail. He had heard of the violence that so often happens to the young who are placed there.

About 20-25% of the youth held in Cook County Juvenile Detention Center are being held on adult petitions. Even though they are juveniles under the age of seventeen, if found guilty they will receive adult sentences. Cortez was only fifteen when he was arrested and charged as an adult. It is his first time being locked up and the thought of losing his entire life to incarceration is a terrible burden for someone so young to carry.

The prison system is incredibly unaccountable. In the state of Illinois, it costs over \$70,000 per year to house one child in a correctional facility, and yet, a new Chapin Hall report concludes that nearly one half of the youth that were released from youth prisons in Illinois from 1996–2003 had little to no involvement with child services—receiving in effect no services, including education, while they were incarcerated. So, while in the custody of the department of corrections, youth who will return to their communities will have had little, if any, preparation for reentry into their families, schools, or communities.

The report goes on to state that the repeat offending rate for youth returning to the Department of Justice is about 46%. That does not take into consideration those who are sent to other county correctional facilities. Recidivism is about 73% within three years from being released. Community-based alternatives to

incarceration, which cost much less (\$2,500–\$9,500), have proven to be much more successful in helping to keep our youth from reoffending and therefore out of prison.

Youth of color are incarcerated at three times the rate of white youth. One out of every four youth of color born today can expect to be



incarcerated in their lifetime. On any given day, one of every 12 youth of color has a parent that is incarcerated. In the United States, which

“As much as he tried to hold them back, tears ran down his face as he spoke of being transferred to the Cook County Jail. He had heard of the violence that so often happens to the young who are placed there.”

incarcerates its citizens at greater rate than any other country, over 100 billion dollars is spent on incarceration every year.

While we spend an incredible amount of our resources to incarcerate, an estimated 1.2 million children are homeless. A study conducted by the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that 23% of all requests for emergency shelter went unmet due to lack of resources. For families, the numbers are worse: 29% of emergency shelter requests from families were denied.

Today a group of ministry students from the University of Chicago came to visit the Precious Blood Center to learn more of our ministry. We had a number of our youth talk to them about

See Brother, continued on page 19...

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Fr. Al Ebach, C.P.P.S.

We are pleased to announce the following recipients of the Kansas City Province Human Development Grants for 2009. Projects chosen for these grants are those that have a connection to Precious Blood communities and serve the poor.

Sister Thea Bowman Catholic School

East St. Louis, IL

A.S.C. sisters help staff this school which is located in a poverty-stricken area of the city. The staff has incorporated a peacemaker program and a second-step class to help students acclimate to society. The holistic learning program includes education through music and the arts, and the grant will help to further the music and arts program.

Hope and Healing Ministry

Davenport, IA

This project operates on a very small budget, offering hope, healing, reconciliation and God's love to men and women wounded by abortion and abuse. Retreats are offered to assist in the reconciliation and healing process. Members and companions from St. Mary Parish in Albia, IA are participating in this healing ministry.



Manyoni Water Project

Mitoo, Tanzania

Fr. Tim Coday, C.P.P.S. requested this funding to complete a water project in the city of Manyoni. Presently the people of the city spend most of their days carrying water from a distant well, or from contaminated streams and lakes. This grant will help them complete the project, which will provide enough water for the entire community.

Sangre de Cristo Health Care Project

Guatemala

The A.S.C. sisters assist the poor and continue to establish new programs to enable systemic change. This year the project is providing vaccination programs along with health care education for families without the necessary resources.

Brother Andre Center

St. Agnes Parish, Los Angeles, CA

Fr. Bill Delaney, C.P.P.S. is very involved in social service programs at St. Agnes Parish. This project not only dispenses money for rent, utilities and food, but also assists in job training and/or directs individuals to participate in a technical college to learn a specific trade. This grant will provide extra funding for people who otherwise may have to be turned away.

Centro Salud Integral "Blood of Christ"

La Paz, Bolivia

This project is administered by the A.S.C. sisters in La Paz to improve the quality of life of families living in poverty. The grant will assist with food, clothing, educational materials and transportation. Because of the tremendous poverty, parents are abandoning children and spouses. When opportunities for education are provided people can get jobs, which will build self esteem, encouraging people to keep families together.

Women's Initiative Network, Inc (WIN)

Wichita, KS

Funded mostly by the A.S.C. community, this project provides women survivors of domestic abuse with educational and emotional opportunities.

St. Agatha Center

St. Louis, MO

This project provides food assistance, pays utility bills and provides educational and employment opportunities for families and individuals who do not have the resources to pay for them. The Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, O'Fallon, MO sponsor this project.

Catholic Charities

Odessa, TX

Catholic Charities provides advocacy service for people who do not speak English, and provides locations for immigrants to receive educational opportunities in a safe environment.

Love Inc.

Clay County, MO

St. James Parish, Liberty, MO has been actively involved in this project. This project is a clearing house sponsored by the churches of Clay County for emergency assistance.

Cristo Rey High School

Kansas City, MO

This high school, sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, provides an education to many Latino and Black students who may not be able to attend school elsewhere.

Fr. Al Ebach is pastor of Sacred Heart-Guadalupe Parish in Kansas City, MO and serves on the Province Leadership Team.

A PLACE AT THE TABLE

Timothy Guthridge, C.P.P.S.

25 years ago, I sponsored a young man in the RCIA at St. James Parish in Kansas City. He was a gay man who was struggling with his sexuality and also wanted to be a member of the Catholic Church. After several months of RCIA process and reflection, he concluded there really was not a place for him in the Catholic Church, given where the Church was at the time, so he left the program.

I appreciated this young man's struggle, and I was saddened by his feeling there was no place for him in the Church. I have always believed that Christ's church should be a place where all people can find a place, even as—and especially if—they struggle with issues of sexuality.

Jesus willingly shed his blood for all people, even the hardest of sinners. This, I believe, is what inspired St. Gaspar to preach the Blood of Christ. Through Jesus' great gift of blood, redemption was available to all.



I suspect there are many people who believe—for a variety of reasons—that there is no place for them in the Catholic Church. I suspect that this is at least part of the reason two thirds of Roman Catholics in the United States don't attend Mass on a regular basis, or any basis. I don't kid myself though; I am convinced that the reason most people don't go to church is simply because communal worship of God is not a value. They would rather sleep in on Sunday mornings.

I will say the Church has come a long way in inviting people to the table. It was only five hundred years ago the the Church was debating whether the indigenous people of the "New World" were fully human. The objective then was to baptize them and have them work as slaves for their European masters in the new colonies.

Slavery was accepted in the Church for a long time. Of course this has to be seen partly from the perspective that most of the world accepted slavery for a long time. It is a sad part of our history that as late as the 1850s there are records of American bishops giving slaves as gifts to religious

communities. Given the relationship the Catholic Church in the United States had in the African American community, I find it surprising there are as many African American Catholics as there are.

The relationship between the Church and women has not always been the best. Only fifty years ago, if a woman went to her pastor to complain about an abusive husband, she would have been told by many priests to be a better wife. I have two twin aunts who told me the story of when they attended Catholic high school in the early 1950s, they asked their pastor why they never read the Bible. They were told the Bible would only confuse them. When I lived in Sedalia, MO a retired school teacher from Sacred Heart School told me that when she was first hired as a teacher in the mid-1960s she was paid \$1800 per year. Even with this the pastor told her she really shouldn't be paid at all since her husband worked and brought in a family income.

I am convinced that most Catholic women would agree the relationship between the Church and women has improved, especially regarding the development of lay ministries. No longer is the role of lay women in the church limited to cleaning the church and rectory, and cooking the priest's meals and doing his laundry.

"I don't remember Jesus turning anybody away. I wonder what Jesus would say to gay and lesbian people today. Obviously he would love them. He would not condone a promiscuous life style, but I don't think he would condemn their love."

In the Gospels, we have stories of Jesus breaking bread and being in the presence of all types of unsavory characters: Scribes, Pharisees, lawyers, tax collectors, adulterous women, women who were possessed by demons and those who had previous marriages. I don't remember Jesus turning anybody away. I wonder what Jesus would say to gay and lesbian people today. Obviously he would love them. He would not condone a promiscuous life style, but I don't think he would condemn their love.

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PRECIOUS BLOOD MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

David Matz, C.P.P.S.

On June 11, 2009, the Precious Blood Ministry of Justice for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Trans-gendered Persons began its summer workshops with 35 persons attending both days. The workshops are a realization of the goal of educating our communities and increasing awareness of the needs of persons who identify as LGBT.

We began our time together in prayer, implementing the circle training techniques acquired through the Precious Blood Reconciliation Ministry. As we sang the song by Sara Thomsen which includes the words “By breath, by blood, by body, by spirit, we are all one,” we invoked the awareness that regardless of our sexual orientation diversity we are all one in the Body and Blood of Christ, each of us created in the image and likeness of God, each of us given a special blessing from God to share with humanity. Each of us uniquely reveals a bit of God’s self that another person could not, but yet “by breath, by blood, by body, by spirit, we are all one,” and thus claim our space and voices within the Church.

Facilitator Frank Bernardo speaking with one of the workshop participants.

Our facilitator for the workshop was Frank DeBernardo from New Ways Ministry, a person whose ministry allowed us to listen to the voices of experience of LGBT persons. He engaged us with sessions focused on the historical development of sexuality and sexual orientation; the “coming out” process, which involves acceptance of a lesbian/gay identity; and an historical overview of the Church’s teachings on sexual ethics and social justice in regards to homosexuality and sexuality as a whole.

I helped lead all of us through a reflection exercise which facilitated the application of Precious Blood spirituality. As a Companion stated in our workshop in regards to “coming out” to his family and friends: As Precious Blood people we acknowledge that “all blood is precious. I know my blood is precious; I need to help other people see that it is.”

As Precious Blood people we continue to strive to engage all the voices involved in the dialogue surrounding homosexuality—and indeed sexuality as a whole—in order to advance together on the way to God’s reign. Frank DeBernardo assisted us well in this endeavor. We look forward to the insights he will give us in August.

We concluded our time returning to the circle enlightened and more inclusive of the voices of our brothers and sisters in Christ. “By breath, by blood, by body, by spirit, we are all one.”

There are two other opportunities to join us around the table where all voices are listened to—in August at the Marillac Center in Leavenworth, KS. Deadline for this registration is July 31, 2009. Registration forms are available online at: www.allbloodisprecious.com. Please email registrations to pbmjlgbt@aol.com or to dmatzcpps@aol.com.

Fr. David Matz is part of the community at Sonnino Mission House in Berkeley. In addition to his work with the Precious Blood Ministry of Justice, he also ministers to a local Spanish speaking congregation.



A PLACE AT THE TABLE

**Sponsored by the
Precious Blood
Ministry of Justice
Leavenworth, KS
August 20-21/21-22**

The Precious Blood Ministry of Justice for Persons who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgendered is sponsoring an overnight workshop in order to dialogue and engage LGBT issues and Precious Blood spirituality.

Because our ministry is one of advocacy, we wish to create a safe place for all in the Precious Blood family to gather and share our stories and experiences, personal and communal, in order to respond to these issues in light of our spirituality.

Each workshop will begin at 7:00 P.M. and conclude at 4:00 P.M. the following day. Arrival is between 5–7 P.M., with some food provided.

Brother, continued from page 15...

life in the neighborhood and their struggles and challenges. One young man spoke of being locked up over twenty times in Cook County Juvenile Detention Center; another spoke of how he just got out of the Cook County Jail. Still another told about his friend who was killed on the Saturday before.

Their lives stood in stark contrast to the lives of the university students. In many ways all the youth fulfilled expectations: youth from this community expect that they will go to jail or, like their friends, be victims of violence; the university students spoke of how their families expected them to go to college.

Last month we facilitated peacemaking circles in juvenile court. Each courtroom was transformed into a circle room—judges, prosecutors, public defenders and probation officers all sat in circle. It was an attempt to “teach” or demonstrate the circle process to the Juvenile Court of Cook County, part of an overall strategy to advance peacemaking circles as a means to deal with offenders, victims and community.

In the courtroom circles, the participants spoke not about the broken law, but about people. They spoke of those in their own lives who made a difference. Some said that they had never had the opportunity to share their feelings about the work that they did every day. They spoke of how much they learned about each other. The experience was about what can happen when there is a relationship between people. I couldn't help but to wonder what would happen if they, too, tried to build relationships with the youth who passed through their doors.

The violence is allowed to continue because we have lost contact with each other as people. The work of reconciliation is creating places where the stories can be told and honored. It is about creating those spaces—sacred spaces—where we see each other in a different way. As I walked the university students down to their van, they kept remarking to me how kind and generous the kids had been. They just shook their heads in wonderment; they just didn't know.

Fr. Dave Kelly is on the staff of the PBMR and also works in jail ministry in Chicago.

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I am mindful of the reality that there have always been homosexual people in the church, there is now, (a fair number of them being priests and consecrated religious) and there always will be. I would not be all that surprised to learn that two or three of our popes were gay.

I am convinced that as time continues and society learns more about homosexuality, the church may (or may not) change its perspective. I am not thinking of the Church diminishing its desire for holy, healthy and chaste relationships, but perhaps coming to a better understanding of what a holy, healthy and chaste relationship for gay and lesbian people may look like.

Most of all I pray that the Church will come to a clearer understanding of universal salvation. Jesus' precious blood was shed on the cross for all people, not for a select few. As a community dedicated to the precious blood of Jesus, I pray that we achieve a better understanding of the universal dynamic of Jesus' redemptive act and that we have the courage to share that clearer understanding with others.

Fr. Timothy Guthridge is at Creighton University in Omaha this summer, doing continuing education for his spiritual direction ministry.

Listen, continued from page 3...

We do not listen to each other to state, force, or feign agreement. We listen to each other because it enables us to live together in peace and love.

God told the Israelites “Now, Israel, listen to the statutes and decrees which I am teaching you to observe, that you may live” (Dt. 4:1). Perhaps it is not only observing the “statutes and decrees” which brings us life, but also the very act of listening respectfully and openly to God and to each other, even when we disagree.

Fr. Garry Richmeier serves on the Province Leadership Team, provides counseling service, and serves as sacramental minister at St. James Parish, Kansas City, MO.

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MY BACK PAGES

Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.

“The saddest thing I can imagine
is to get used to luxury”

Charlie Chaplin

As I prepare to send this issue to press, it is an early summer morning here in Kansas City, so early that there is no light outside, little traffic noise on the street, and my dog is still napping at my feet, hardly ready yet to take on the day. I just read the gospel for this coming Sunday, with the words, “He instructed them to take nothing on the journey but a walking stick—no food, no traveling bag, not a coin in their purses.” Doing with less. Simplifying. Gratitude for who I am and what I have. Freedom for service.

Paul, in the second reading, tells us that “in him we have redemption by his blood...in accord with the *riches of his grace that he lavished upon us.*” [italics mine]

My thought processes are often influenced by whatever book I most recently finished—in this case, *Marley and Me* by John Grogan (and the movie by the same name). Those not dog people please indulge me, but I am moved by these words from the book, and know their truth.

“Was it possible for a dog to point humans to the things that really mattered in life? I believed it was. Loyalty. Courage. Devotion.

Simplicity. Joy. And the things that did not matter, too. A dog has no use for fancy cars or big homes or designer clothes.... A dog judges others not by their color or creed or class but by who they are inside. A dog doesn't care if you are rich or poor, educated or illiterate, clever or dull. Give him your heart and he will give you his. It was really quite simple....”

“Marley taught me about living each day with unbridled exuberance and joy, about seizing the moment and following your heart. He taught me to appreciate the simple things—a walk in the woods, a fresh snowfall, a nap in a shaft of winter sunlight. And as he grew old and achy, he taught me about optimism in the face of adversity. Mostly, he taught me about friendship and selflessness and, above all else, unwavering loyalty.”

I see connections, too many to unfold in detail here. But I am quite certain that our attitudes and actions regarding what we think matters most, what is most important, will shape our way of living and serving and loving. Simplicity and joy. Loyalty and courage. It's the “dog spelled backwards thing” again.

The dog has cleaned his bowl
and his reward is a biscuit,
which I put in his mouth
like a priest offering the host.

I can't bear that trusting face!
He asks for bread, expects
bread, and I in my power
might have given him a stone.

Biscuit
Jane Kenyon
