

The NEW WINE PRESS

Motivated by the Spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

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CELEBRATION IN VIETNAM

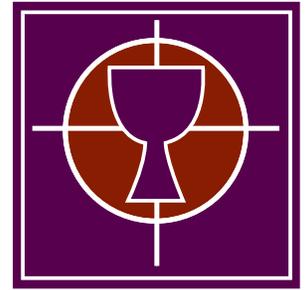
On Sunday, February 17th, at St. Joseph Parish in Ho Chi Minh City, Dominic Nhan Bui Anh, C.P.P.S. was definitively incorporated into the Congregation of Missionaries of the Precious Blood, becoming the first Vietnamese citizen of the world-wide C.P.P.S. community.

In addition to Fr. Lac Pham, Director of the Vietnam Mission, and Fr. Dien Truong, Mission Director of Formation, others from the Kansas City Province in attendance were Fr. Jim Urbanic (who as Provincial received Dominic's pledge in the name of the community), Frs. Joe Miller and Joe Bathke (who led the week long retreat that preceded the incorporation), Fr. Bill Hubmann, and Companion An Nguyen of Alameda, CA (who was also visiting relatives in Vietnam). The other C.P.P.S. guests were Fr. Francesco Bartolini, Moderator General; Fr. Amaladoss Mariasusai, Director of the Vicariate of India; and Fr. Robert Schreiter of the Cincinnati Province.

During the same liturgy, Joseph Truc Vu and Peter Tam Hoang were received into Pledged Candidacy, joining Thomas Kham Nguyen and John Vianney Loi Nguyen who made this commitment previously. Seven candidates are now in initial formation, bringing to 14 the total number of members and candidates in the Vietnam Mission. 🍇



Following their retreat, the candidates of the Vietnam Mission pose with retreat masters Fr. Joe Miller (top l) and Fr. Joe Bathke (top 3rd from l), and Frs. Dien Truong (2nd row l) and Lac Pham (1st row r). Also participating were some young women discerning their vocation with the Adorers of the Blood of Christ.



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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. *The New Wine Press* is published monthly. The submission deadline is the 20th of the month.

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Leadership Notes

An old Zen proverb states: “All instruction is but a finger pointing to the moon; and those whose gaze is fixed upon the pointer will never see beyond.” This is a warning to avoid getting so caught up in the “pointer” that we miss the more important thing being pointed to. It is also a warning to “instructors” to avoid making themselves or their instruction (the pointer) the main object of attention. As the finger pointing to the moon disappears from attention once the moon is seen, so should instruction fade into the background once it has pointed out the goal of the instruction.

As followers of Jesus, we are instructors. We are the fingers pointing to God’s presence and love in the world. The life-giving healing, forgiveness, and compassion of Jesus pointed to a God who was lovingly involved with humanity. As the *perfect* “pointer,” Jesus was that to which he pointed, i.e., God’s love among us.

Sometimes we don’t “point” as well as Jesus did. Often we think the pointing is about us, e.g., *our* ideas, opinions, systems of thought, political views, religion, theology, and culture. When these things become primary in our discussions and actions, we are then pointing to ourselves rather than to God’s love and presence.

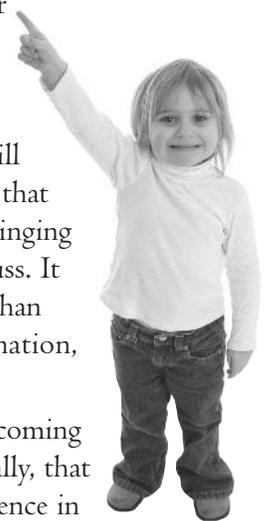
This mistake is especially obvious when it happens in religions and religious organizations, as their stated purpose is to point the way to God. When a religion’s scripture or teachings become “the point,” people feel justified in using suicide bombings do God’s will, for example. In our own church we point to God’s presence in the gathered Eucharistic assembly and the sharing in the common meal, but because of our church teaching (instruction), some are not invited to share in God’s presence there. We also point to God’s love and presence in life-long loving, intimate, and committed relationships. Because of our interpretation of scripture and church teaching, however—instructions which should point to God’s love—homosexuals are not allowed to participate in that expression of God’s love. We point to God’s presence in pastors who lead the flock, but then say that women cannot embody God’s presence in leadership. By keeping the “gaze” fixed on us and our instruction, we hinder people and ourselves from seeing beyond.

Religions must continually be on guard that their teachings, laws, tradition, doctrine, and practice don’t just point to themselves, but to God’s presence. As a religious order within our church, we have the opportunity and the responsibility to help the church point beyond itself. This will probably include being more pastoral in our dealings with people rather than legalistic, and not being shy about doing so publicly. It will also include vocally challenging church teachings and practices that exclude people based on superficial judgments. It may mean bringing up issues for discussion which the church doesn’t want to discuss. It will also mean ministering to people in relational ways rather than hierarchical ways, since that is at the very heart of the incarnation, and it mirrors God’s union with humanity.

Only by serving others in true selflessness can we avoid becoming “the point” of our words, actions, and instructions. Paradoxically, that is how we become that to which we point: God’s love and presence in the world. Do we have enough faith in that love to point it out to others and then trust it to guide people—rather than insisting on submission to our instruction and even micromanagement of beliefs and behaviors? ❧

THE POINT

Garry Richmeier, C.P.P.S.





From l to r: Companion An Nguyen, Fr. Lac Pham, Dominic Nhan Bui, and Fr. Dien Truong.



Fr. Jim Urbanic with Dominic and an unidentified relative following the Incorporation Ceremony.



Fr. Francesco Bartolini, Moderator General and Fr. Amaladoss Mariasusai, Director of the Vicariate of India.

Dominic Nhan Bui, C.P.P.S. (center), with the four pledged candidates. From l to r, Joseph Truc Vu, Thomas Kham Nguyen, John Vianney Loi Nguyen, and Peter Tam Hoang.



I wish to express my most sincere gratitude for the wonderful possibility I have been given to participate at the definitive incorporation of the Dominic Bui Nanh, the first Vietnamese citizen of our Congregation.

I was so amazed and overwhelmed to be at Ho Chi Minh City, together with members of the c.p.p.s. and to participate in an experience that will last in my heart and spirit. I have realized how hard Lac and Dien are working and how great is their love for the people they live with and the Congregation. I have also felt how serious they are and full of initiatives, but at the same time prudent, not wishing to rush.

I was amazed how much energy they put in their work and how tireless is their dedication to the ministry of the Precious Blood in that wonderful and ancient land that is Vietnam. I also have seen how much respected they are by the priests they work with and how much they love them, and through them our Congregation and the efforts done to establish it in Vietnam.

In the name of the whole Congregation I thank you and the Kansas City Province. It is a sincere thanks, that comes from the heart, which wants to confirm that what you are doing is well supported by the whole Congregation and all are close to you with their prayer and interest.

I have passed wonderful days. I am so happy and I can feel that our Congregation is vibrant and full of life. I have shared community, friendship and hope with my confreres.

May the blood of Christ always give all of us that energy and that life which will make us fully committed to our ministry.

Sincerely,
Fr. Francesco Bartoloni, c.p.p.s.
Moderatore Generale



Fr. Francesco preaching the homily during the Incorporation Mass.

GARDENING IN NICARAGUA

Lynda Quistorff

The welcoming banner in one community read, “You are the gardeners who make our souls blossom.” Ed and I recently visited Nicaragua as part of a Mission Awareness Trip sponsored by the Christian Foundation for Children and Aging. Along with 21 other sponsors from across the United States we made the journey from winter to summer, from our comfortable homes to hotel rooms, from one culture to another, in order to meet our sponsored friends and their families and to learn a little about their lives, hopes and dreams.

Our home away from home was a hotel in Managua, with one night in another hotel in the far north of Nicaragua. After our arrival, we were divided into small groups, each with a translator/guide. Every morning we were awakened at 5:30 or 6:00 to gather for prayer and an overview of the day’s activities. Following breakfast we traveled by small bus and large van to visit one of the subprojects. The trips, although long, were on good roads—with only one exception.

Everywhere we went, we saw people walking—to work, to get water or to collect firewood. School children, distinguishable by their white shirts and dark trousers or skirts, walked from several blocks up to nineteen kilometers to attend their classes. The drives took us across broad valleys and over mountain roads, past rivers, lakes, and acres of coffee beans laid out on plastic to dry.

Upon our arrival at each subproject, the sponsored children and elders and their families greeted us warmly with smiles and applause. On two occasions we celebrated Mass to begin the visit. Greetings, music and dancing followed. The young children (in one case little girls who obviously loved the dance and little boys who weren’t so sure about the whole thing) danced first. They were followed either by older children or parents performing folk dances. Children presented

dramatic skits; fathers played music. The mother of a young girl recited a poem about the beauty of Nicaragua; a father read a long testimony he had written. The mood was festive! Following the presentations, a snack was served and introductions began with handshakes, hugs and kisses. Ed shook the hand of one young boy who greeted him solemnly in English, “Good afternoon.” At each subproject some of our group met their sponsored children.

When the festivities were completed, we visited different people in their home—in small groups. The houses are primitive, most often one room with an earthen floor and a tin roof. Possessions are few but precious. Each hostess (the men were usually away at work) described her situation and visited with us, showed us the garden, the house, and talked about the children. Our group was privileged to meet a variety of people.

The first was a married couple with three children. Because it was Sunday, both parents were home. This

“Our couple works in a cigar factory and earns \$12.50 (each) per week. Their small house is owned by the wife’s father. Mom attended school up to the seventh grade, Dad only the second or third. They have several pieces of furniture including a sofa and a hutch to store their belongings. Next we visited the owner of a coffee plantation. Theirs is a success story. They have been able to buy several acres and to build a multi-room house. Their seven children are mostly grown, and they have been able to hire a man to help them. They look forward to running water coming to their mountain village, although it may be two more years.

“Our sponsored families also tend the gardens of our hearts and lives. They prune out any remaining presumptions that people who live on earthen floors live in squalor. They pull out by the roots the weeds of ignorance that judge the poor to be lazy or irresponsible. They untangle the vines of avarice as they share from their small substance.”



Ed and Lynda Quistorff with their sponsored friend, Cruz, during a recent visit to Nicaragua.

Our third visit was with 2 families who were relocated to a project just before Hurricane Felix. Each family was given a small plot of land, but only substandard building

supplies—leaving them mostly on their own to build. The first woman’s husband works away, so she is alone with the children much of the time. The second is a grandmother who cares for her two teenaged and orphaned granddaughters and a very young great-grandson. Their belongings are sparse: two beds and several chairs.

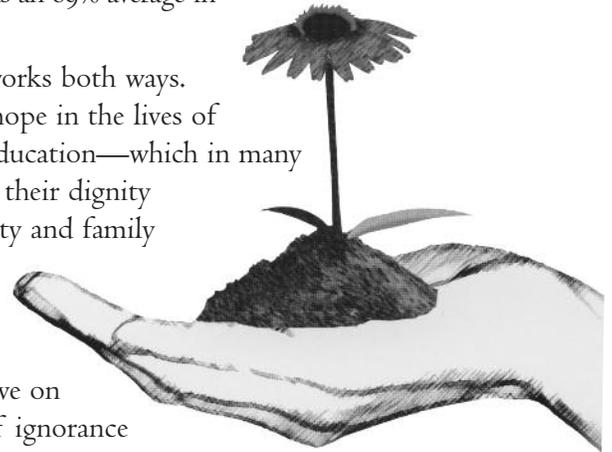
Our final encounter was with the owners of a small banana plantation. The husband works away; the wife babysits and does housekeeping. Their home has two rooms and a small kitchen.

Of course, the highlight of the week for Ed and me was meeting our sponsored child. After ten years, “our” Cruz is no longer a child but a young man in his third year of high school. The awkward feelings at first meeting gave way to conversation as best we could with our limited Spanish and Cruz’ limited English—and the assistance of the translator. Cruz’ solemn face on the first day gave way to broad smiles and a relaxed demeanor on the second. We are the proud sponsors of a young man who was first in his class in grade school and has an 89% average in high school. It was very difficult to say goodbye.

As the banner proclaimed, we are indeed the gardeners—and it works both ways. Our monthly CFCA contribution offers if you will the fertilizer of hope in the lives of these good people, by providing food, medical and dental care, and education—which in many cases would be nonexistent but for sponsorship. Parents too can have their dignity restored through local job training, literacy programs, and community and family building. The seeds we plant are watered by our prayers and correspondence and support.

Our sponsored families also tend the gardens of our hearts and lives. They prune out any remaining presumptions that people who live on earthen floors live in squalor. They pull out by the roots the weeds of ignorance that judge the poor to be lazy or irresponsible. They untangle the vines of avarice as they share from their small substance—like the man who gave two oranges from his trees to each of us in gratitude for the gift of sponsorship in the life of his aged wife.

Ed and I expect to be sponsors for the rest of our lives. If you are already a sponsor, we invite you to consider a Mission Awareness Trip to visit your sponsored friend. It is a experience you will never forget. If you have not heard about CFCA, we encourage you to visit their website and prayerfully consider walking with the poor by opening your heart to a child or aging person. Sts. Gaspar and Maria would approve. 🌱



OFFERING HOPE. RESTORING DIGNITY. WORLDWIDE.



CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN AND AGING

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CFCA's mission is to walk with the poor and marginalized of the world.

We provide personal attention and direct benefits to children, youth, aging and their families so they may live with dignity, achieve their desired potential and participate fully in society.

We invite people of good will to live in daily solidarity with the world's poor through one-to-one sponsorship.

We build community by fostering relationships of mutual respect, understanding and support that are culturally diverse, empowering and without religious or other prejudice.

Grounded in the Gospel call to serve the poor,

CFCA is a lay Catholic organization working with persons of all faith traditions to create a worldwide community of compassion and service.

I work as a therapist at a community mental health center in Kansas City, Kansas. In this role, I view myself as an instrument of God's healing—the 'Divine Healer' who has the power to make us whole again. I would like to reflect on several Precious Blood themes or qualities that impact my role as a therapist and my everyday life.

Sacred Space

I view my office as a sacred space and holy ground where clients come to be healed from the hurt, pain, and suffering in their lives. My office is decorated with angels in the form of pictures and figurines, some of which clients have given me over the years. I consider the room as their holy space too and when I look at these gifts I feel their strength and healing presence guiding the person who sits there, often in emotional pain. The angels help me remember the higher, more powerful forces in this universe who guide us, be they God, angels, saints, and/or our deceased loved ones. Many clients comment that they feel a sense of calm and peace in the room. At times clients will ask "Do you believe in angels?" or "Do you believe in God?" and it allows them to open up about spiritual issues or questions.

I also have a picture of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane with an angel comforting him prior to the crucifixion. It hangs on the wall behind the client's chair and reminds me that Jesus also experienced trauma and pain. I pray to be an angel of healing for the person sitting in front me.

People First

My work often involves a very hectic pace with pressures to see more clients, managed care paperwork, phone calls, and emails. At times I feel pulled in a thousand directions. So I try to put people first—and when I do, everything else seems to fall into place. The most important person in the world is the person sitting in front of me. Sometimes I forget to push the "Do Not

Disturb" button on the phone and a call comes through. When the client asks if I'm going to answer the phone, I always say no and then press the DND button. I want the clients to know that they come first.

Kindness and Hospitality

I believe there is a power in kindness and compassion that helps the healing process. The Dalai Lama says, "My religion is kindness." I try to be kind to others because you never know what struggles someone has been through in their lives. A friend shared this quote: "Be kinder than necessary, for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle." Another adage I like is, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

Robert J. Wicks in his book *Everyday Simplicity* writes about hospitality: *This sense of peace is the real hospitality we need to offer people when they come into our lives, our 'spiritual homes.'*

Whether it be a chance encounter in a hallway, a long talk on a park bench, or a quick phone call, people must feel they are being welcomed home; they must feel the peace of God. They must feel the ordinariness, openness, and welcoming spirit that comes from an attitude and life of prayer and gives them the room to be and explore themselves further. Hospitality is not simply being 'chronically nice' to strangers. Instead, it is offering others a gentle space where they can feel welcomed for who they are now. To do this we must have such a space within us, one that has been cleared by a recognition of our own sinfulness and a belief that we are forgiven and called to go on with what new knowledge we have learned about ourselves.



BRINGING HOPE AND HEALING TO A BROKEN WORLD

Judy Kotecki-Martin

I tend to be an introverted person by nature, but have been trying to be more hospitable to those I meet on a daily basis. For example, I like to walk around Pierson Park Lake, which is near our home. There are two older brothers, Daniel and Gilbert, who walk regularly and also fish during the summer. Sometimes the brothers walk together and at other times separately. Daniel is quite friendly and outgoing and doesn't know a stranger.

However, his brother Gilbert is very quiet, reserved and shy. I make it a point to say hello to Gilbert whenever I see him. Once I began doing this, it took almost a year for him to finally speak. One day he said “Hi,” laughed and joked, and gently touched my arm. Now whenever I see Gilbert he always says hello. Despite our desire for immediate results, it can take a long time to break down walls.

Being Present

To be truly present to another person we need to listen. As a therapist I find that listening is hard work. In our world of technology—with TVs, radios, computers, cell phones and video games—our attention span has declined. According to research it is now 7 minutes—not coincidentally the amount of time between commercials on TV.

Hearing and listening are not the same thing. To listen means to ask questions, clarify, reflect back feelings and meaning, empathize and try to understand. We all know what it is like when someone has truly listened to us because we feel understood. We feel connected and whole again as a human being. Once a person feels that they have been listened to and understood, they are more open to change. Needless to say, by the end of the day I am often emotionally drained because of the energy required to truly listen.

Being present also involves an open, nonjudgmental and accepting attitude toward the other person. I am humbled to work with clients because I always know, in the words of St. Augustine, “There but by the grace of God go I.” Clients share the brokenness, emotional pain, struggles and intimate details of their lives—a sacred trust. I have witnessed people in some of the darkest periods of their lives, and have also seen the strength and resiliency of the human spirit which enables one to adapt, grow and move on in life.

In my work I see a variety of clients from all walks of life—a small microcosm of the world that keeps me grounded. Precious Blood spirituality involves reaching out to the marginalized. I see people who struggle with limited finances, loss of jobs, homelessness, living in poverty and drug dealing environments, and being on parole from prison. Whenever I see the report of a murder on

the nightly news I reflect on our human connections—and inevitably a family member or friend of the deceased person will come to the center coping with the pain of that experience and grieving the loss of that person.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Many clients deal with conflict in their marriages and families. Some clients struggle with a history of past physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Once a relationship of trust has been built with the client, I may broach the subject of forgiveness or reconciliation. Sometimes the person is not ready; at other times they have been considering forgiveness and are open to the idea. Forgiveness is not just about pardoning another person who has wronged us, but rather a way for us to let go of the resentment,

anger, hurt, and bitterness, and be emotionally

healed. Reconciliation takes forgiveness

a step further, when both parties

are willing to work on rebuilding the relationship.

If the offending party

chooses not to reconcile,

at least the other person

holds the key to release

from the prison of their

emotional pain.

Forgiveness is a powerful

tool for healing. Shortly after the

training I saw a female client who had a strong

Christian spiritual faith and forgave a good friend who had deeply hurt her. During her crying and sobs she couldn't understand why everyone wasn't forgiving like herself. She asked, “What's wrong with me?” I responded, “There is nothing wrong with you. You are just more spiritually advanced than most people.” She was astonished by the remark and it gave her a new insight into herself that she is a loving, worthwhile person.

Forgiveness is viewed by some people as a sign of weakness, but in actuality it takes a person of inner strength to forgive. As Mahatma Gandhi said, “The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.” Or Martin Luther King, Jr. who wrote, “We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love.”

Spirituality

I take a holistic approach to working with clients, focusing on the physical, mental and spiritual dimensions

See *Bringing Hope*, continued on page 9...

ALL MY CHILDREN

A Concerned Parent

At the request of a priest-friend of mine, I am telling my story of being the mother of a gay son. I hope that my story will enlighten others to view gay and lesbian persons in a broader light.

I am 75 years old, raised in a strict Catholic home in rural Midwest America before the Vatican II Council of the 1960s. I had 12 years of Catholic education from nuns and was influenced by priests of that era, graduating from high school in 1950. I married at age 21 and was recently widowed after 54 years of marriage to the love of my life. We had 6 children—the oldest being a son who announced to us at the age of 35 that he was gay. After the initial shock passed, I tried to comprehend just what this meant or how it would affect our life in our small rural parish. I assumed that the small parish church we attended would not be compassionate to our needs.

Our son was in seminary training from the age of 14 until he left at age 24 and got a job in Chicago to work and support himself. In 1988, at age 35, he came home to tell us, his family, that he wanted to “come out of the closet” and be accepted as a gay person. Having a good dose of Catholic guilt from my early formative years, I wondered what I did to cause this to happen.

After an emotional rollercoaster ride, I knew I needed help to face this issue. I sought counseling through the Catholic Church at a retreat house and read books to try to understand this issue. I also felt that I would need to set the pace and be an example for the rest of the family to follow. I really felt lost. After a series of counseling, reading books and praying, I have a better understanding of gay orientation. I learned that being gay is not a choice, but a given. Who in their right mind would “choose” a life style that is held up to scorn and rejection by a segment of our society as well their Church?

Through my basic formative Catholic education, I knew that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. Now I add, “with some female, some male, some gay, some lesbians, etc.”—and all are loved by our Creator. Then I hit a snag. If these people were made by God to be gay or lesbian, surely they were entitled to a sexual expression of their love for one another, the same as heterosexuals. I am not speaking of promiscuity, but committed relationships. I am still struggling with this.

Looking back on my son’s life, I realize there were signs of his sexual orientation that I simply ignored or chose not to think about. He didn’t like contact sports as a child; he was gentle by nature, and did not indulge in aggressive behavior. He didn’t like to carry a gun and go rabbit hunting with the men in our family at Thanksgiving time or shoot “clay pigeons.” He attended high school at a minor seminary, and when he was home I did not see a normal attraction to the opposite sex during his teen years. He signed up as a conscientious objector during the draft in the Vietnam War era.

After hearing him tell of his being gay, it still took me some time to figure this all out—especially in regards to the church—and to accept him and his friends. Once I had a fuller understanding of homosexuality, it opened my mind and my heart to the concerns of gays and lesbians. I have met some of his friends, and they are

“My son is not an active Catholic Church member; because of the church’s stand on homosexuals he feels rejection. This haunts me, as the Church is my life. I have learned to pray and put this in God’s hands.”

the most compassionate, loving, caring people I have ever met. They are good, law abiding citizens who hold jobs, and love and care about humanity. He calls weekly to see how I am doing and visits regularly. I love him as dearly as my other children. He “came out” to his siblings when he came out to us, his parents, and they all have

a good relationship with him. I then left it up to each of my children to share this issue with their respective families, (my grandchildren) however they chose to handle this. Attitudes have changed in the past 20 years, and my grandchildren have grown up and faced this issue in high school, if not in middle and junior high school.

Today my son is not an active Catholic Church member; because of the church’s stand on homosexuals he feels rejection. This haunts me, as the Church is my life. I have learned to pray and put this in God’s hands. My job is to love him and not judge him. I pray for his welfare, as I pray for all my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

I am sorry that I must sign this letter anonymously, but at this time, I do not feel ready to “come out of the closet” as the mother of a gay child. I hope and pray that one day I will be able to tell my friends and church members without fear and with the assurance that they will love and respect my son. 🌸

Bringing Hope, continued from page 7...

of their lives. It is important to balance all these areas to be a healthy functioning human being. I am fortunate to work in a setting that allows me to address the spiritual aspects of a person's life, to take a holistic approach and incorporate spirituality into the healing process.

In working with clients I have become aware of several factors that help in the healing process that are rarely talked about in psychological literature. One book I have read confirms some of my observations as well: *Hope Faith & Healing* by Michael McCullough, et al. They discuss several factors that help in the healing process including: spiritual faith, hope, a positive attitude, social support, and a sense of purpose and meaning in life. When I see a person in therapy who may be lacking in one of these areas I try to help them incorporate that missing piece in their life.

In my personal life I try to maintain a balance among the physical, mental and spiritual domains. I exercise daily. I enjoy reading psychology books, journals, and newspapers, as well as attending workshops to keep up on the latest developments in the field of psychology. I pray daily in the morning with the daily scripture readings, and I use other inspirational material as well. I enjoy reading material from different religions and cultures—for example, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Hindu & Native American—because it gives me a more diverse perspective. I also spend time in quiet reflection and solitude to clean out the cobwebs in my own heart, soul and mind. This allows me to be much more focused in working with clients. Prayer is spiritual life-giving energy that reenergizes and revitalizes me to avoid compassion fatigue and burnout. I simply could not continue to do this work if I did not take time to develop my spiritual life.

Final Thoughts

I have a passion for psychology and working with people in the mental health field. I get the biggest thrill and sense of satisfaction when a person gets their life back. It may not be their old life, but rather a transformation into something new that they never expected or thought possible. I have seen people grow and change beyond my wildest imagination. As I said earlier, it is God who is the 'Divine Healer' and I am the instrument. I believe that God can use any one of us to be an instrument of healing.

My Companions group is like a compass that keeps me on the right track. We can talk about our everyday lives and how Precious Blood spirituality can guide us to bring about a world with more peace, love, justice, truth and mercy. The Precious Blood priests and brothers also challenge me by how they live their lives, pray, live in community and are open to change. I know I have a long way to go in understanding and living Precious Blood spirituality—but thanks to my Precious Blood family, I know I am not alone. We make this journey together. 🌸

Judy Kotecki-Martin is a Precious Blood Companion. She has a Master's Degree in Psychology and has worked as a therapist at Wyandotte Center for Community Behavioral Healthcare, Inc., Kansas City KS since 1994. Prior to that she worked at a rural mental health center in southern Iowa for 11 years.



GONE BEFORE US MARKED WITH THE SIGN OF FAITH

+Frs. Francis Kinney & Mauricio Restrepo,
of the Cincinnati Province.

+Esther Tauchen, mother of Companion Lou Carey.

+Ralph Trout, father-in-law of Companion Maria Trout.

Thank you to the many community members and companions who expressed your sympathy following the death of Steve's father. Your prayers, words and kindness continue to give us support during this time of loss.

Steve and Marie Trout

Vocations Office

In 1963 Pope Paul VI designated Good Shepherd Sunday (4th Sunday of Easter) as *World Day of Prayer for Vocations*. This year it falls on April 13. We are asked to pray for those discerning their life vocation, but we also spend some time turning inward and examining the way we are living out our own calling. All are invited through baptism to share in the mission of Jesus. In addition, we answer a call to vocations of single, married or religious life. Therefore, it is fitting that Good Shepherd Sunday should invite us to reflect on our call to follow, as well as encourage us to ask others to respond to the call to religious life. First we listen for the voice of Christ, then we listen to that voice—calling each one of us by name.

We pray for those discerning a vocation at this time—single, married or religious life. They probably hear conflicting calls these days. Some are from false prophets luring them to the “good life.” In the Gospel for Good Shepherd Sunday this year, Jesus cautions us to enter the sheepfold through the gate. The gatekeeper (Shepherd) opens it for those who hear him call them by name, and he then walks ahead as they follow the sound of his voice. They will not follow a stranger’s voice. In today’s culture many people follow the voices that attract them to hoped-for fortune and fame. Some are too distracted to even hear a calling. God is still calling people to religious life as priests, sisters and brothers.

We all have a responsibility to help promote and affirm religious vocations in our Church. Jesus promised not to leave his flock unattended, but he also asks us to pray for “workers for the vineyard”. It is the work of all of us, lay and religious, to uphold a positive view of religious life and encourage people to consider that God may be “putting in a call” to them. We all can recount experiences of being blessed with the presence of a “special religious person” when they were most needed at a critical point in our lives. We need more shepherds

to minister to the flock in this challenging time in the life of the Church, and we all have a part to play in the response of those being “called” today. On this *World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, we are asked to pray in a special way for these vocations.

Since we are all responsible for promoting vocations, I leave you with these thoughts as we approach April 13.

Is there someone who you believe has qualities that might lead them to religious life? You may be God’s instrument in inviting them to consider a call to ministry. Don’t hesitate to start the discussion.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Joe Miller, C.P.P.S.

Does your parish have a Vocations Committee? If it does, you might consider joining this committee and lending

your support. If such a committee is not in existence, one can be formed. The Vocation Office has tools to help you.

Please encourage your parish to include a special prayer for vocations in the General Intercessions for the weekend of April 13.

Those of you who will be preaching have a wonderful opportunity to incorporate into your homily the topic of vocations on Good Shepherd Sunday.

Distribute a Prayer for Vocations at the weekend Masses and urge people to pray daily for that intention.

Invite a priest, religious sister or religious brother to speak about their discernment and pastoral experience at a parish gathering. Encourage dialogue as well.

Let us all dedicate special time on April 13 to prayer, reflection, and discernment on the need for vocations in our Precious Blood Community and in our Church. If you know of someone who is inquiring about religious life, please contact either Fr. Joe Miller (816) 781-4344 or Sharon Crall (641) 932-5589. 



Joe Miller, C.P.P.S. (r), with candidate Joseph Truc Minh Vu, during Joe’s recent visit to Vietnam.



The New Creation

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PRECIOUS BLOOD MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

So much of our work involves bringing people together. We stand in the midst of what are at times very difficult situations and we encourage people to talk about that which they carry within. Some have been harmed deeply; many have feelings of hopelessness. A good many of the families have been fractured or separated by violence and trauma. Even the title of our newsletter speaks to the mission to reach “beyond boundaries” and find new ways of “being” together.

There are visible boundaries that separate people; for example, some of us can remember the Berlin Wall that separated a nation and families. There is another wall that has been proposed to separate the United States from our neighbors in Mexico. This wall, already built in some places, separates not only nations, but families and communities; it separates the people of God.

I read recently of a community of people on the border of Mexico and the United States where a wall actually separated the town. The town had been there for years, and recently, the federal government had built the wall. Even though a wall separated them, they continued to celebrate Mass together. They could not reach across, except for the small holes in the wall that allowed them a limited sign of peace and the distribution of communion, but they celebrated Mass together. It is a great image for how the Eucharist reaches out and crosses many barriers and boundaries, bringing people who are divided by walls together.

Not all barriers or walls are as visible as the Berlin wall once was and that border town wall is now. Some barriers are buried deep within us. A young man who gathers with us for our Making Choices group (youth coming out of detention) struggles to “lower the walls” that he has built up to

protect himself from those that would harm him. In the safe place of the Precious Blood Center, he begins to talk about the severe abuse he received from the hands of his own mother. His wall is built securely. It is held up by the fear of revealing himself to those around him. It is sustained and supported by the feeling of not being good enough, of being disposable and just not worthwhile. Little by little, brick by brick, he finds the safety to begin to dismantle his wall.

I was talking to a young man in Cook County Jail, whom I met years ago at the juvenile detention center. He was fighting a case that threatened to take his freedom for a long time. He spoke of how he got to this point in his life. He spoke about all the pain and the hurt that he had caused others, and how he was now getting what he

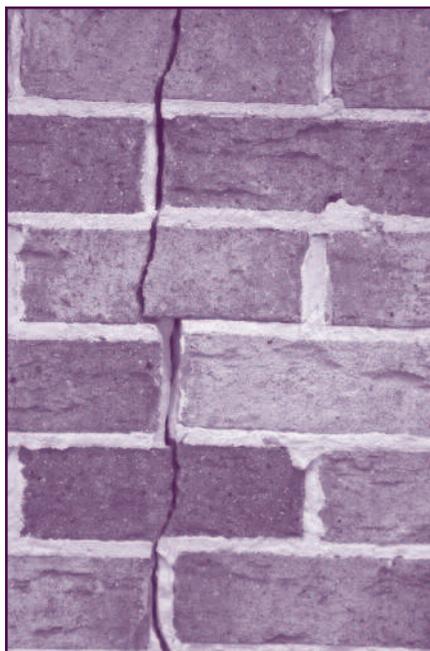
deserved. He spoke of wanting to live differently but not knowing how. I simply listened. When his time was up, he slowly got up and walked back to his cell. He still carried his burden; he still faced countless years of incarceration; but his was a story that was told and—more importantly—heard. For a moment at least, he did not live in isolation.

Ours is a spirituality of creating safe places where people can gather and speak openly and honestly, and listen to one another’s stories. It is about trying to reach across boundaries and borders that get in the way of being a community. Don’t get me wrong, I understand why people build walls; I understand that kind of fear. I have a few walls myself. But if we are faithful to our call, then we must work hard to gently and carefully—brick by brick—tear down

the walls of separation. As a people, we must move beyond boundaries. ✠

BRICK BY BRICK

David Kelly, C.P.P.S.



MY BACK PAGES *Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.*

"I never sang anywhere without giving the people listening to me a chance to join in. As a kid, as a leftie, as a man touring the USA and the world, as an oldster, I guess it's kind of a religion with me.

Participation. That's what's going to save the human race."

Pete Seeger

For those of us old enough to remember 1968, 2008 is filled with many 40th anniversaries. Reflecting on the recent events in our Vietnam Mission, it is impossible not to think back to a very different kind of U.S. presence at that time.

I recently watched a PBS American Masters program titled, "Pete Seeger: The Power of Song," and it reminded me of one anniversary that doesn't make many lists. In the fall of 1967, Seeger appeared on the Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour, his first network appearance in 17 years, following his appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee and subsequent blacklisting in the early 1950s.

He was not allowed to sing one particular song, however—but in January of 1968 CBS relented and Seeger returned to sing the song that had been inspired by his watching a platoon of American soldiers wading through the Mekong River. Thus the title and recurring phrase of the song, "Waist deep in the big muddy, and the big fool says to push on."

It was a striking metaphor to say the least, and one that feels sadly familiar once again. As does the reality of blacklisting and fear of diverse views (in church life as well).

Seeger is credited with reintroducing America to its musical heritage through the folk revival. His influence

goes far beyond what most people realize, even as his songs have become familiar (e.g., *Turn, Turn, Turn*). After hearing Seeger sing *We Shall Overcome* at a folk school in 1957, Martin Luther King remarked to someone, "That song really sticks with you, doesn't it?" It still does.

Seeger tells the story of a man who came up to him following a concert during the Vietnam War, introduced himself, shook his hand, and said, "Mr. Seeger, I came here to kill you tonight." He was from a small town in upstate New York, and had joined the army with many of his friends. Some had died in Vietnam and here was Seeger singing about pulling out of there.

Seeger recounts, "We sat down and we sang *Where Have All the Flowers Gone* together. And I remember him saying, 'I feel clean.' He had been filled with such hate and now he was crying and he thanked me for changing his mind. He had come to kill me and then he listened to the concert and he was so moved that he couldn't do it."

I can do no better than to conclude this with Seeger's words from the concluding minutes of the program:

"Once upon a time wasn't singing a part of everyday life, as much as talking and physical exercise and religion? Can we begin to make our lives once more all of a piece? Finding the right songs and singing them over and over is a way to start. And while one person taps out a beat while another leads into the melody, or when three people discover a harmony they never knew existed or a crowd joins in on a chorus as though to raise the ceiling a few feet higher, then they also know there is hope for the world." 🍷

The
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