



The New Wine Press

Motivated by the Spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

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Denied a Place at the Table

by Fr. Dave Matz, C.P.P.S., Interim Director of Companions

"The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house to the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems" (Evangelii Gaudium, p. 40-41).

In early January, I received a call from Carol, a companion candidate from Liberty, that her mother had died. After receiving my condolences, she moved on to the purpose of her call. Shortly after the death of her mother on December 26, her pastor called to tell her that she and her partner of 21 years, another woman, could not receive communion at her mother's funeral. He had learned of their relationship in her mother's obituary published in the paper. Eventually, the priest also told her that she could come to Mass but that as long as she persisted in her illicit relationship with her partner she could never receive communion at their parish. He told her he gave the same message to heterosexual cohabiting couples also. She asked if I could in any way help reconcile her to her parish community and to her pastor.

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Carol Parker leading prayer at the 2013 Assembly

At first I reacted angrily to what had happened, and wanted justice for Carol and Josie. But as I calmed down, I decided to write a letter inviting the pastor to dialogue with the hope of reconciling Carol and Josie with their pastor and with their parish community.

The Pope exhorts us not to use the Eucharist to coerce people but to celebrate the powerful

nourishment it is for us who are weak. Pastors must be pastorally prudent and bold—knowing that we don't arbitrate who receives grace, but are rather facilitators of a great gift given freely to us all. Church is not a tollhouse; we don't pay to get in. There is a place for everyone at God's table. Catholics today find themselves in a moral quandary regarding the sexual debate involving sexual orientation, inclination and sexual acts, and the human person created by God with the desire to love and to be loved. We have an inherent desire for relationship with God and with others, and sometimes those relationships do not mirror the heterosexual norm. As people of the Precious Blood, how are we supposed to respond if couples like Carol and Josie are unwelcome at the Eucharistic table?

Precious Blood people strive not to be obstacles in the path to dialogue and reconciliation; we are to be facilitators of them. We strive to work with God and with each other to be facilitators of God's grace, not closing off graceful encounters but creating graceful encounters with Jesus for all our brothers and sisters, especially at the Eucharistic table.

So far there has been no response from Carol's pastor. My hope is that when the door opens we can foster relationships, facilitate grace, and move on to building the reign of God where all God's children have a place. As for now, Carol and Josie have not felt welcomed in their home parish. However, she and her partner have found a religious community and another parish, including a pastor that welcomes them. It is an inconvenient hour-long drive from their home, but at least there they have found a place to celebrate and encounter grace in God's house and at God's table.

Commentary

by Cathy Pankiewicz, *St Joseph, Missouri Companion*

Those of us who are faithful Catholics and have homosexual children and grandchildren (many of whom have loathed themselves into near suicide) find ourselves in an unsettling place—yet one that offers us an exciting opportunity to speak for the marginalized in our Church. In light of the recent controversy in our diocese where a pastor denied the Eucharist to baptized homosexuals, living in a monogamous relationship and pursuing a relationship with God, one is left to wonder if this is really what the message of Jesus Christ is all about. What gives one the power to embrace selective scriptures and ignore the rest of the Bible?

Was the Bible really meant to be used as an arsenal of judgmental "stones" for people to throw at one another? Clearly, some in the Church want to do that, convinced that God is on their "side," that any confusion we feel is from Satan, and that theirs is a "holy war." These same individuals must be quite concerned about a recent statement from Pope Francis: "The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house to the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems" (Evangelii Gaudium, p. 40-41). The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as to make moral decisions...he must not be prevented from acting according to his conscience especially in religious matters" (1782).

Clearly, there are some people who should NOT receive the Holy Eucharist. Those who do not believe it is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and who are not open to that possibility should not come to Communion. I wonder if the priest in Chillicothe asked everyone in the congregation to abstain from receiving Communion if they were just "going through the motions." Did he ask all divorced and remarried Catholics to abstain as well? What about those Catholics who favor capital punishment or who struggle with issues involving contraception? Did Father ask them to abstain from the Body and Blood of Jesus so as to avoid scandal?

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Missouri Lesbian Couple Denied Communion at Mother's Funeral

by Bob Shine, *New Ways Ministry*

Carol Parker and Josie Martin have been committed to one another for nearly two decades, but their love did not stop one priest from denying Parker Communion at her mother's funeral last December.

The lesbian partners have attended St. Columban Catholic Church in Chillicothe, Missouri, for over a decade, but it was not until arrangements were being made for the funeral that Fr. Benjamin Kneib informed them they could not receive Communion. *NewsPressNow* reports:

"It was a shock to hear him say that," Ms. Parker said. "I never expected that, especially at my mother's funeral."

She added that at the funeral, most in attendance chose not to take Communion out of respect for her and Ms. Martin. Despite this show of solidarity, the women no longer feel welcome at the church and have begun visiting another an hour from their home.

"That was our faith community. It really took away a lot of things for us... He (Father Kneib) would still like to see us there, but I don't feel like I'm welcome if I can't take part in the main focus of the Mass."

Fr. Kneib wrote a letter on January 1st to Parker explaining why he denied the couple Communion, and he apologized the he did so at a moment like her mother's funeral. For her part, Parker hopes the priest will:

"...open his eyes and fully receive the LGBT community into the church."

"We're all God's children, and we have every right to receive Communion...Even the pope has said, 'Who am I to judge?'"

This recent event is reminiscent of a 2012 incident when Barbara Johnson, a lesbian woman in Maryland, was denied Communion at her mother's funeral. In that case, the priest was not only removed from ministry, but asked to leave the Archdiocese of Washington. Johnson, on the other hand, spoke about how the experience strengthened her faith and reminded Catholics that "All that matters is love."

Communion denials are a very controversial issue, and though infrequent, are deeply harmful when they occur. It is helpful for all LGBT-positive Catholics to call to mind the words of a Rhode Island priest responding to inquiries after a gay couple there was denied Communion:

"I am not in the business of denying Communion...As Pope Francis said, it's not fair to judge. I preach the Gospel, and whoever hears it, hears it."

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The New Wine Press

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

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

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

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

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

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The Revolution of Tenderness

by Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S., Provincial Director

During a retreat recently, the mother of a 28-year-old son who is gay and been away from the Church for a long time told me that her son is seeking out a place at the table once again because of Pope Francis' famous phrase, "Who am I to judge?" You will recall that on his way back to Rome from the World Youth Day last summer, the Holy Father responded to a question from a reporter about priests who are gay. "Who am I to judge?" he said. With those words, Pope Francis opened the door to many who had been on the margins, who have had the door of the Church slammed in their face, who left the table of Eucharist in search of a more welcoming place.

March 13, 2014 marks the first anniversary of the election of Jorge Mario Bergoglio as successor of St. Peter. His humility, his emphasis on God's mercy, his passionate advocacy for the poor and marginalized, and his compassionate presence has captured the world's imagination. His inclusive style of servant leadership, modeled very early when he washed the feet of inmates including two women (one of whom was a Muslim) at a juvenile detention center in Rome on Holy Thursday, has changed the hearts and minds of many.

In reading *Evangelii Gaudium*, *The Joy of the Gospel*, one of the many lines that leapt off the page and hit me between the eyes was this one: "The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of

tenderness (89)." It evokes the passage from Dorothy Day's autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, I quoted on my ordination invitation 32 years ago: "The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution that has to start with each one of us." The founder of the Catholic Worker movement went on to say we begin this revolution when we take the lowest place and wash the feet of others.

Pope Francis has begun this revolution of the heart again through his witness and his words. It is a revolution of tender mercy and compassion. We can recall many examples within the past year, images and scenes from his audiences that have found their way to the front of the world's newspapers and gone viral on the Internet. Children and elderly, the sick and the suffering, the deformed and the denied have found a place in his warm embrace. This is the new evangelization with a broad smile and outstretched arms that reflects a community of believers many want to belong to because it is based on the belief that Jesus is the embodiment of the compassion of God.

This revolution of tenderness recalls how Jesus saved his harshest critique for those religious leaders who rigorously and rigidly enforced laws that broke the spirit of the people rather than giving praise to God. As we heard recently at the Sunday Eucharist in the passage

from Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. Like Jesus, Pope Francis reflects the belief that we can follow the rules out of a sense of obligation rather than as an opportunity to grow in holiness and love. We can follow Jesus out of fear instead of faith. Jesus desired that revolution of the heart where one's life is rooted in radical love. Not just love of the rules but of those who make them and those who break them and those who bend them and those who amend them.

This radical love is the challenge to love even those we find most difficult to love. One of the most moving memories from this first year was the Angelus blessing on September 16, 2013. As seventy thousand people were soaked to the bone and huddled in puddles in the pouring rain, Pope Francis said, "If, in our hearts, there is no mercy, no joy of forgiveness, we cannot be in communion with God, even if we observe all his precepts because it is love that saves." Then he asked each person to take a moment of silent prayer and remember someone in their life with whom they are angry or broken or estranged. Pray for them, he implored, hold them in your heart in mercy and love. "True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others," Pope Francis writes in *Evangelii Gaudium* (86).

One of the Holy Father's suggestions to not only spark but sustain this revolution of tenderness is the "need to create spaces where pastoral workers can be helped and healed, 'places where faith itself in the crucified and risen Jesus is renewed, where the most profound questions and daily concerns are shared, where deeper discernment about our experience and life itself is undertaken in the light of the Gospel, for the purpose of directing individual and social decisions towards the good and beautiful (77)." This vision is very similar to one of the provocative propositions promoted by the General Assembly of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood last summer in Rome; and one of the action steps our Provincial Council has proposed in looking at the present and future possibilities for Precious Blood Center. This is what each of our Mission Houses in Liberty, Berkeley, Kansas City, Saint Joseph and Sedalia, Centerville and Albia, Wichita and Warrensburg, Crownpoint and Mead, Baileyville and Tiburon, Odessa and Carthage, Rockford and Des Moines, Chicago and Los Angeles, Kearney, Joliet and Ho Chi Minh City—wherever Precious Blood people are, they are places where people "can be helped and healed."

As "missionary disciples" of the Blood of Christ, the vision of Pope Francis that he outlines in *Evangelii Gaudium* resounds with our spirituality and our charism of reconciliation and renewal. Echoes of St. Gaspar's vision are found throughout The Gospel of Joy and I would encourage all members, companions, volunteers, indeed, all people of faith to read it, study it, pray with it, gather in groups to dialogue about it, and use it to influence our community life and inform our mission. For as Pope Francis reminds us, the charisms of religious congregations "are not an inheritance, safely secure and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church (130)."

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One can only hope that this event stirs the consciences of Catholics everywhere to recommit themselves to the belief that all blood is Precious Blood—be it the blood of an unborn child who is "straight" or "homosexual" (I don't know what the previous phrase means)—that all of us are sinners and unworthy except by the Blood of Jesus to receive the Eucharist; that we do not choose our sexuality any more than we choose eye color; that people are lonely and crave relationship with someone who loves them; that all are made in the image and likeness of God; and that people who disagree vehemently with each other on the issue of homosexuality are expected to "love one another" none the less. The latter may be the hardest one of all. Most heterosexuals don't hate homosexuals. The Church doesn't hate homosexuals—but the dialog often seems that way.

Societal pressures are many. Some sadly lead us away from a relationship with God. But others can be a force for the good, and thankfully the Holy Spirit can be at work in a multitude of venues. A woman's right to vote, desegregation, and the right to health care are only some of the outcomes of societal pressures that make this country a more Godly and humane place.

Finally, as Catholics, let us pray for one another. Let's pray for those who hate us for speaking up. Let's pray for those in our Church who just want this issue to go away. Let's pray for our priests, bishops and Pope Francis. Let us pray for those who feel "different." Let us pray that everyone who hungers can "come and eat without price." Let us pray!

LOST BOYS

The Lost Boys of Chicago

by Mike Donovan, staff member of PBMR

Before dawn on Christmas morning, having gone to Mass on Christmas Eve, I left on my annual Christmastime prison road trip. Living alone, far away from my nearest family, I very much appreciate the importance of these visits to the young men I see on these trips, who are separated from those they love. This year's Christmastime trip took me to the adult correctional centers of Stateville in Joliet, Hill in Galesburg, Western in Mt. Sterling, and the men's prison in Centralia, Illinois.

During my visits, I listened as Arturo told me of his frustration of never hearing from his mother, despite him writing to her every day for the last month. He also expressed concern for his father's health, because he hadn't visited in a long time, and Arturo was unable to reach him by phone. I met Arturo when he was 15 years old, and he has 19 years left on a 27 year sentence.

The next day, I also visited Victor at the same facility. He was a little nervous because he was finally going to see his father for the first time in seven years. A gang leader,

his Dad was recently released from prison and finally cleared to visit his son. Of course, it was his father's influence that precipitated Victor joining the same gang at age nine! Victor has 17 more years behind bars.

At my next stop, Jesús expressed disappointment that he received no family visits in 2013. I was his lone visitor throughout the year. He worries about becoming disconnected from his family, realizing their importance to his successful re-entry—even if that re-entry is still eleven years away.

The usually optimistic Chaz was the next inmate I saw, but even his spirits were deflated. He had just returned to general population after two weeks in segregation. Those two weeks in segregation resulted in him being dropped from the two college courses he was taking. He was within two weeks of acing those courses. Again, Chaz had no visits from his mother or sister in 2013, nor did they answer his phone calls. Chaz has 18 years before his release, a long time to be alone in the world.

After my trip to Mt. Sterling, it was on to Joliet where Reginald was waiting after winning the appeal of his case. The State now has to decide if they are going to contest his successful appeal. Despite this potentially good news, which would result in his release, he was already worrying about where he could live upon re-entry. Before his incarceration he lived with his father, who died while he was locked up. He is estranged from his mother who lives in Atlanta. He has nowhere to go, no job skills, and he will leave prison with no money.

I ended my trip in Centralia, visiting the only young man who receives a minimum of one visit a month from his parents. The trip from Chicago is five hours, but for Alejandro, the love and support of his parents makes all the difference. Upon his release in two years, he'll have a loving family to go home to.

It is during these visits with inmates—who I met when they were “kids”—that I feel closest to God. I can see God's face in these young men; I can see the goodness in them. It is easy to see that they too are children of God. I always go home from these visits inspired by the patience, perseverance, strength and courage of these young men. Despite the indignities and injustices they experience while incarcerated, I am always amazed that they never give up on themselves. Despite being disconnected, estranged, and separated by distance from their families, they do not give up on their families or on God. I am honored to listen to their stories as part of our ministry of presence and accompaniment.



Whatgot Backup?

“What is necessary is that we maintain the intention of serving God without becoming discouraged. You are like a person who sings out, but at the same time, being deaf does not hear the harmony” (Gaspar del Bufalo to Mr. Giovanni Francesco Palmucci, June 24, 1824, #911).

To hear the harmony you need a little faith. You have to believe that you are not singing alone. You've got backup.

Do you ever wake up feeling like you're carrying a great weight that rounds your shoulders and makes it hard to walk steady? Perhaps you have to focus to put one foot in front of the other to proceed through the day. Global warming, hunger, immigration, violence, abuse... The evil one would have you drown in your thoughts, wallowing in despair: it is easy to go there. If you do, remember that you are not alone. You are in communion with the Blood of Christ, equipped with the tool of prayer, medicine for the soul, tools to find water so the thirsty might drink.

Listen for the voice. Seek silence. Silence your own inner voice for a time so that you can find God's voice. Finding courage in the quiet is difficult. Even though we are deaf, we must have faith. There is a chorus, a harmony amid the cacophony of sirens, super storms, radio news and stereos. There is breath, the Sacred Breath of tender mercy and reconciliation, the Breath of creation. Breathe. See if you can hear the gentle breeze. Somewhere someone is learning to sing. They might be off-key, but they don't lack courage. Maybe it's a kid singing the ABCs or a kid in a punk band, angry at the world, at the injustice. We might be surprised at how many voices are in that backup chorus trying to be agents of change in a world that's been crazy since before the time of St. Gaspar.

*-Gretchen Bailey, Alameda CA Companion
Originally posted on the Gaspar Virtual
Spirituality Center, November 28, 2013*

Breathing In-Breathing Out

A Metaphor for Mission Rooted in the Mission of Jesus

by Timothy Guthridge, C.P.P.S.
Director of Initial Formation

Last November, I had the opportunity to attend the 2013 Congress of the Religious Formation Conference. The theme of the Congress was, “Rooted in the Mission of Jesus; Reaching out to the Margins.” Fr. Donald Senior, C.P., former president of the Catholic Theological Union and noted scripture scholar, gave a keynote address on “Mission Rooted in Jesus.” He reminded us that following the Second Vatican Council, religious around the world were called to look to the charisms and gifts of their founders to see the gifts of the Holy Spirit which were given them, and reflect on their application to the present signs of the times. During the last fifty years, the Precious Blood communities have done an excellent job in looking to the charisms of our founders to help understand our God given charisms in the modern world. Don Senior challenged us to go deeper. Our founders were about the mission of Jesus, and as religious in a very conflicted age, we must root ourselves more in the mission that Jesus himself lived.

Don used the metaphor of breathing in and breathing out to understand the mission of Jesus. In life, everybody breathes in and breathes out. Jesus breathes in and breathes out. Jesus breathed in people on the margins and Jesus breathed out disciples to spread the good news. Don quoted Pope Francis in saying that “the Church that does not get out of itself gets sick on its own stale air.” The mission of Jesus calls us to get out of ourselves.

This is a special challenge for a Church as institutional such as ours. We are accustomed to people coming to us, to the church, to the school, to whatever Catholic institution we serve and engage in mission. Jesus did not sit and expect everybody to come to him. Jesus went out from town to town to spread the Good News and bring healing wherever he went. Jesus sent his disciples to spread the Good News and bring healing as well.



Days of Prayer & Reflection

Precious Blood Center

2130 Saint Gaspar Way
Liberty, MO 64068

Second Saturday of the Month

Next dates: March 8 and April

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9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

March 8th Presentation:

Lent: On the Road to Recovery

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

The season of Lent invites us to experience a spiritual recovery—to recover our true self, that image of God within us. As Thomas Merton wrote, “To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is



Questions?
Contact Elizabeth Heule
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Understanding “Fraternity”

by Corey Knapke, Cincinnati Province Candidate in Formation



It has been several months since my last “InFormation” column, and I had several things I wanted to write about this time around: how formation has changed since last year; how my discernment with the community is progressing; how

my classes and ministry are going. But after some prayer and reflection, I decided instead to write about a word I value greatly: fraternity.

Frater means “brother” in Latin. Better understanding brotherhood has been my business since 1993 when my parents gave me my first real brother. My understanding grew substantially in 2008 when I pledged a bandmen’s fraternity, Kappa Kappa Psi, while an undergraduate. From that group, I learned the Greek alphabet and a lot about the college fraternity tradition. I also gained many close friends, whom I sincerely call “brothers.”

America’s college fraternity tradition grew mostly in the beginning of the 19th century. It was influenced strongly by Freemasonry and other groups of that nature. It is interesting that during this same time St. Gaspar was doing spiritual battle with the Carbonari, Jacobins, and Masonic societies cropping up around Rome.

Why would Gaspar urge people to denounce such groups guided by principles as noble as “brotherhood”? As it turns out, the Missionaries and the Carbonari had two different understandings of fraternity.

A fraternity in the Missionary sense is not simply a group of men who are “chummy” together. It is also more than a group sharing common ideologies, for even ideologies must be rooted in something deeper; an ideology by itself is superficial. Gaspar and his entourage shared this foundation: The Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ.

The conception of Christian fraternity, which pre-dates the Enlightenment, is where “frater” finds lifeblood. It

is in the Incarnation that we see a true model of brotherhood in Jesus. We can root our concept of fraternity in something greater than mere philanthropy (love of humanity) or philosophy (love of wisdom).

Gaspar understood the great value of joining men together in “bonds of charity,” sharing in Christ’s Precious Blood. Francesco Albertini helped perfect this formula with his foundation of the Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood in 1808.

To link all of this back to my life, I suppose I can say that my understanding of fraternity took its next step in 2012 when I first began speaking with Fr. Vince Wirtner about vocations. I was drawn to religious life because I saw there a model for fraternal living that I found attractive. Fr. Vince captured this thought by explaining that the Missionaries are like a “holy fraternity.”

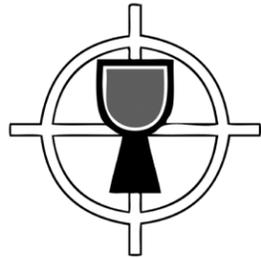
A caveat: “Holy” does not always equate with “perfect.” It is difficult at times to feel the fullness of a “holy fraternity” while living in a house of just two brothers. It can be difficult when personalities disagree, but we find in scripture: “He who is a friend is always a friend, and a brother is born for the time of stress” (Proverbs 17:17). Christ’s Precious Blood, which was purest of all, ran with the dirt and grime covering his broken body when he exhibited what he thought was true fraternity.

At last July’s Brother retreat, led by Br. Joel Giallanza, C.S.C., I was especially struck by the special vocation of “brotherhood” within the Church and within the Precious Blood community. As for the latter, my observation was these men exhibit a unique sense of the word fraternity by their life commitment to Christ and to each of their fellow Missionaries. While priests can find part of their fraternal charism in performing the Sacraments in persona Christi, the Missionary Brother is especially committed to that true fraternal ideal set forth by Gaspar and Albertini all those years ago. They could choose to serve God independently, but they instead choose to do so arm in arm chanting the rallying cry of The Blood.

My last fraternity, of which I still consider myself a brother, was rooted in the love of music. Music is noble, but it is still a created thing. The Creator is no created thing, and I find that a fraternity grounded in the love of God trumps all others. I look forward to learning more about fraternity as this journey continues.

Companions Continue the Work of Gaspar

by Tony Pino, Newark, California Precious Blood Companion



On a drizzly day in Fremont, California, the Companions of the San Francisco Bay took a trip to the sunny Italian Peninsula with Fr. Jerry Stack, who presented a discussion of the relationship between St. Gaspar del Bufalo and the laity. The main point of the discussion was that the laity have always been part of Gaspar's vision and his work. He has always been close to us. His breathing continues in the good work of the modern laity.

The presentation was part of a retreat arranged by Fr. Dave Matz, C.P.P.S., Interim Director of the Companions. Thirty-one companions attended the retreat, which was held in the Penthouse of Emeritus at Fremont, a senior living center. The Penthouse has a partial view of the City of Fremont and the now-greening hills at its east side. The companions represented parishes in Sonoma, Alameda, Berkeley, Newark and Hayward. (They ate well, thanks to the work of Mary Ann Anas and her husband, George). The retreat opened and closed with prayer, and offered time for group work on reflective questions dealing with personal faith within the community.

The central focus of the retreat was the role of the laity in life of Gaspar del Bufalo. Gaspar was born and raised during a time of great need in what is now Italy. The peninsula was divided by different languages and provincial attitudes. These societies were often disorganized; banditry and dissolute living were common. Vendettas were frequent and murder rates high. Newborn babies were often abandoned. To compound these misfortunes, diseases were also rampant. It was "a sinful time," which called for a redemptive force. Gaspar was to provide this force through his charism—his holy gift—to the physically and spiritually needy of Italian society.

Gaspar needed the laity to accomplish this dedicated work. It was from this foundation of activity that we modern lay companions derive our spiritual origins, our lineage, our inspiration and obligation to love and work with passion and zeal.

Early in his life, Gaspar did hospital work with the support of lay workers, a relationship which was reflected in all his future work. From this point, and inspired by a contemporary, Monsignor Francesco Albertini, and previous saintly men—St. Francis Xavier and St. Francis DeSales—Gaspar set out to do mission work of all sorts, using lay associates and sodalities to provide the continuing work of preaching and working among the poor, sick and imprisoned.

Gaspar's missionary activity required a physical infrastructure, and he established fifteen mission houses as the focus of this work. Each house was headed by a director, a deputy director, treasurer, and other officers who had detailed instructions from Gaspar on how their duties were to be performed. These men were expected to be ready for immediate assignments to other jobs if the need arose. Gaspar's detailed management is a side of his charism that most of us were not aware of. He was a creature of the world as well as the spirit.

The most moving part of Gaspar's story is his gentleness in the application of reconciliation. He encouraged the easy and gentle forgiveness of sins so that confessors could soon participate in the evangelizing and healing of Italian society. He wanted "sinners" to return to society as a benevolent force; he wanted them to know that forgiveness was a reflection of the greatness of God's love.

Finally, Gaspar's charism is a reflection of Jesus' blood, to which Gaspar was deeply devoted. His devotion probably reflected the quietude and humility of his own mother and of St. Francis De Sales, whose charism was one of gentleness and quiet devotion.

It was a great day in Fremont! We learned that we the laity always had a place in the vision of the Order of the Precious Blood. It affects our spirituality in that we, like those under holy orders, have important work to do. Through us, Gaspar's energy still burns.

Labels

by Fr. Keith Branson, C.P.P.S., Publications Editor

It's hard to find anyone in the news today without a label. Almost everyone's mentioned with a label, spoken or implied: *conservative, liberal, gay, straight, Christian, Humanist*. Labels seem universal; few escape them.

Labeling is human nature. We want a lot of information quabout people we really don't know, and labels seem to help us. Unfortunately, most of them boil down to *friend* and *enemy*, and we attach a long list of traits to both without thinking, without realizing no one wears a label perfectly. Labels tell us too little, and invite injustice as we fill out details, particularly in choosing exclusive loyalties.

Heretic is a label usually unspoken but easily applied. It's not only bishops and priests who feel compelled to enforce this label: we all want to remove anyone we think

is wrong, lazy, or negative from our personal elect and dismiss them from our charity. We can cast such people from our hearts rather easily. We forget what we have in common, even if it's only the God-given basic human dignity which can't be taken away or given away.

Christ-seeker is a label Pope Francis uses. While drawing attention to the dehumanization and evil of our times, he hasn't condemned individuals. This label, *Christ-seeker*, seems more important than any other we may get: after all, our basic identity isn't what we do, or say, or advocate, or condemn. We are all bearers of the Blood of Christ, and that's not only the sole label which should matter to the Church, but also to our inner orientation of Charity.

Social Justice Lenten Soup Suppers

Join us on Wednesdays in Lent for a simple supper followed by a new discussion each week.

Precious Blood Center
2130 Saint Gaspar Way, Liberty, Missouri
5:30-7:30 p.m.

March 12-nonviolence
March 19- capital punishment
March 26-economic justice and dignity
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Sponsored by the Kansas City Province Justice and Peace Committee.

Contact: Br. Daryl Charron, C.P.P.S.,
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Questions? Contact

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THE WINE CELLAR

As we prepare to celebrate the anniversary of our foundation in 2015, the Fall 2014 issue of *The Wine Cellar* will revisit the theme of Reconciliation. The new spirit unleashed by Pope Francis provides us new material for our reflection on our core ministry, and invites us to continue the conversation.

The deadline for submissions is September 20, 2014. Documents should be no longer than 1500 words in Word format. Poems, prayers and artwork are also welcome. Please include a brief bio and four reflection questions with article submissions. Material from any cultural or historical context is welcome. Any member or lay associate of a Precious Blood community is invited to contribute.

For more information or to submit material, please contact

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