



The New Wine Press

Motivated by the spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

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Assembly 2011
page 1

Companions Grow
page 4

Doing Great Things
page 5

Assembly Planning
and Dialogue
page 6

A Long Distance
Call
page 8

On the Run No More
page 11

My Back Pages
page 12

Assembly 2011

Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.

Members, companions, candidates and guests gathered at Church of the Annunciation in Kearney, MO from May 2-6, 2011 for the 2011 Provincial Assembly of the Kansas City Province. Good weather and gracious hospitality were in abundance.

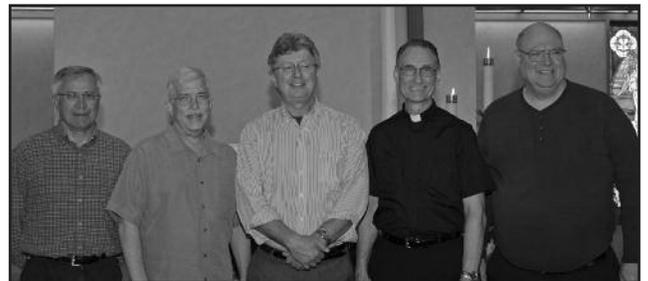
The gathering began on Monday evening with a social followed by a meal prepared by parishioners of Sacred Heart-Guadalupe Parish in Kansas City. The cuisine reflected their various countries of origin in Mexico and Central and South America. The evening continued with a prayer service, remembering the deceased members and companions. All were surrounded by the names as they were sung in litany. "All you holy men and women, pray for us" filled the space, along with the memory of all those who went before us. Assured of the prayers of our predecessors, we turned to the present and the future. Dennis Meier, our facilitator, gave a brief introduction to Tuesday's discernment and election process, and the rest of the evening was given to further socializing and visiting and reconnecting.

On Tuesday morning, Dennis led us through a continuation of the discernment process. (You can find his summary on pages 6-7 of this issue.) On Tuesday afternoon, further discussion preceded the voting for new leadership, this time focused on the team model of leadership which was used the past four years, as well as people's ideas and opinions on the best model to use going forward. There seemed to be a consensus that a team model serves us best and also reflects a more inclusive style of ministry in the province. At the same time, it was also acknowledged that how the team model is carried out will depend on the makeup of the new team and the leadership of the provincial in this regard.

The elections for new leadership followed. Fr. Joe Nassal was elected Provincial Director. The provincial council rounds out the team, and consists of Fr. Richard Bayuk (Vice-provincial and First Councillor), Fr. Ron Will (Second Councillor), Fr. Jim Betzen (Third Councillor) and

Fr. Tom Welk (Fourth Councillor). The new team will officially begin their leadership ministry following an installation ceremony on June 6th at Savior Pastoral Center.

On Tuesday evening, companion covenants were celebrated with Eucharist. Moderator General Fr. Francesco Bartoloni presided; Fr. Jim Urbanic and Companion Peggy Doherty broke open the Word. A record number 86 companions made and renewed covenants (see page 4).



From l to r: Frs. Tom Welk, Richard Bayuk, Joe Nassal, Ron Will and Jim Betzen.

continued on page 2...

Wednesday began with morning prayer, during which Peter Hoang, Joseph Vu and John Vianney Nguyen received the Ministry of Lector. At the beginning of the morning session, Fr. Francesco gave a short report on the work of the General Curia in Rome, and took questions. Much of the morning session which followed was devoted to a discussion of the Center Study. This was the result of months of work by a committee chaired by Fr. Al Ebach, and extensive interviews with members and companions by Companion Elizabeth Heule. The consensus seemed to be that the committee continue its work, with the blessing of the new leadership, and present some specific options for consideration.

Our guest for lunch was Bishop Robert Finn, the ordinary of the local diocese. In his brief remarks before the meal, he thanked the province for their presence and ministry in the diocese.

The afternoon session began with Fr. Jim Urbanic giving a brief history and overview of the Volunteer Program. Chris Hoyt, program director, then gave a report on the program, outlining its growth over the last three years since the province first voted to provide funds for this new ministry. During the discernment gatherings preceding the assembly, the Volunteer Program was mentioned often as one of the signs of life in the province. Given its growth and support, the members were asked to affirm the program as an ongoing, funded ministry of the province, which they readily did.

Fr. Joe Miller and Sharon Crall, province vocation directors, and Fr. Vince Wirtner, vocation director for the Cincinnati Province, then gave a report on their ministry. All three were part of a task force that met during the last six months to begin the process of establishing a joint vocation ministry between the two provinces. This report has been sent to leadership, and will be acted upon following further study and refinement. Marie Trout then gave a brief report about Companions. Some of her remarks are reflected on page 4.

This ended the business of the day, and everyone then gathered for a festive Eucharist honoring and celebrating the jubilarians. Fr. Bill Walter presided and Fr. Mark Miller preached.



Elizabeth Heule & Al Ebach



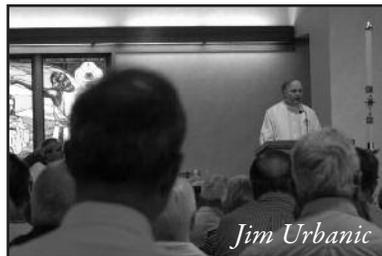
Vince Wirtner, Sharon Crall & Joe Miller



Bishop Finn



Chris Hoyt



Jim Urbanic



Scholarship Recipient



Daryl Charron

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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Front, l to r: Fr. Mike Volkmer, Fr. Francesco Bartoloni, Fr. Tom Welk, Fr. Ron Will, Fr. Joe Nassal, Fr. Richard Bayuk, Fr. Jim Betzen, Bishop Joe Charron, Br. Daryl Charron. Second: Peter Hoang, Fr. Dave Matz, Joseph Vu, Fr. Jim Urbanic, Fr. Bill Delaney, Fr. Garry Richmeier, Fr. Bill Walter, Fr. Mike Goode, Fr. Jack McClure, Fr. Jim Schrader, Fr. Lac Phan, John Vianney Nguyen, Fr. Ed Oen., Dominic Bui. Third: Fr. Vince Hoying, Fr. Linus Evers, Fr. Joe Miller, Fr. Timothy Armbruster, Fr. Mark Miller, Fr. Al Ebach, Fr. Timothy Guthridge, Fr. Bill Miller, Fr. Richard Colbert, Fr. Joe Bathke. Back: Fr. John Wolf, Mark Yates, Fr. Dien Truong, Fr. Joe Uecker, Fr. Keith Branson, Fr. Tom Albers, Fr. Jim Sloan, Fr. Matt Link. At the assembly, but not present for the photo: Frs. Alan Hartway, Daniel Torson, Bill Hubmann and Paul Sanders.

The festivities also included a banquet, with a short program featuring each jubilarian offering some remarks and stories. Those present were Frs. Jim Schrader, Tom Albers, Bill Walter, Linus Evers, Mark Miller, Jim Urbanic and Bishop Joe Charron. Frs. George Fey and Dennis Schaab were unable to attend, but we were entertained with some stories about both of them, in spite of their absence. The program concluded with the awarding of the 2011 Precious Blood Scholarships to 14 deserving high school and college students, some of whom were able to receive the award in person.

Thursday morning was the final session of the assembly. Fr. Joe Bathke gave a report on the initial formation program in Chicago, in which he highlighted the journey of Peter, Joseph and John Vianney into a new culture and academic world (cf. article on page 8 of this issue). Fr. Lac Pham than gave a report on the formation program in the Vietnam Mission, and took many questions in response.

Sr. Joni Belford, director of the Precious Blood Leadership Conference, took questions on her written report. The session ended with Fr. Vince Hoying giving a report on each of our retired members living at St. Charles Center. The closing Mass followed, with Fr. Linus Evers presiding and Fr. Jim Shradler preaching.

All province ministries and offices published reports, which were made available before the assembly. Those not giving verbal reports were Finance Office, Communications Office, Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation, and Ministry of Justice with LGBT Persons.

Frs. Jim Shradler, Tom Albers, Mark Miller, Bill Walter, Bishop Joe Charron, Fr. Linus Evers during the blessing at the Jubilarian Eucharist



Companions Grow

Marie Trout

“The Companions are thriving and flourishing.” “Where did all of these new people come from?” “Can you believe how many people made covenant.” “Isn’t it great to have so many new people?” These are just a few of the comments heard on Tuesday evening of the assembly as the community gathered for a Covenant Rite and Eucharist.

Fifty-three people renewed covenants and thirty-three people made first covenants during Tuesday’s celebration. It is easy to focus on the numbers only, and to be excited by that. What is truly exciting, however, is what this means to the future of the community. As I sat down with all of the newly written covenants, it was overwhelming to read the statements and promises people made to live out their call to live Precious Blood spirituality.

Moderator General Fr. Francesco Bartoloni shared during the Mass that we are a small community; we don’t need to be big, but we are called to be unique and to make a difference in our world. The covenants show how these eighty-six companions will make a difference by responding to the call of the Precious Blood. They shared a desire to grow more in this spirituality, to learn more

about the Word and apply it to life. Many shared about all of the ministries they are involved in—including lectors, Eucharistic ministers, ministering to youth, and helping with many levels of faith formation. Some shared a call to help the marginalized by devoting time to prison ministry, LGBT issues, or helping at food kitchens and pantries. Many told of their ministries to those dealing with health issues, from family members to those homebound or living in health care centers. Many stated they are motivated by their baptismal calls to model a servant lifestyle and feel they are truly one of the thousand tongues Gaspar dreamed of.

These many statements express the uniqueness of each of our calls and give hope to the energy and life that the Precious Blood of Christ continues to bring to the world.

2011 Assembly • Companions



The companions who made and renewed covenants are members of the Albia, Central Missouri, Kansas City, Liberty, and St. Joseph groups. Photos of the individual groups with their member sponsors can be viewed on the province website.

Doing Great Things

Peggy Doherty

My late husband John and I were among the first group of companions at St. Barnabas Parish in Alameda, CA to make covenant with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, close to 18 years ago. John was known in Alameda, and is still remembered, as a man with a lilting Irish brogue, twinkling blue eyes and a delightful sense of humor.

He was also known as the man in the beige-colored pickup truck who drove about town finding a hundred different ways to be of service to others, such as working at the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room, helping about the parish, helping to establish a Food Bank and finding sources of food to distribute to those in need, and serving on a committee to find productive uses for the former Alameda Naval Air Station as the base closed the land and its buildings were returned to the city.

When he was named Alameda's Citizen of the Year in 1994, John was quoted as saying, "I don't do anything special, but when I see something that needs to be done, I do it."

Everyone knew about the big things—the newsworthy things that he accomplished to better our city and the lives of the people who lived there. Even I didn't know about the many so-called "little things" that he was constantly doing. At his funeral, the homilist said that everyone who spoke to him about John in the days immediately after his death began with "I remember when John..." and then told a story about some kind little thing or some big accomplishment.

One such story that remains in my mind is about a young woman whose father had recently died. John saw her leaving church after Mass and asked her how she was doing. Tears came

to her eyes, and she began to cry. John led her back into the church and into a back pew. He sat with her quietly until she was able to regain her composure.

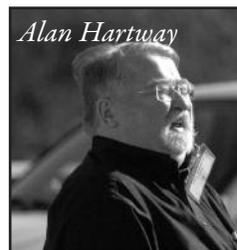
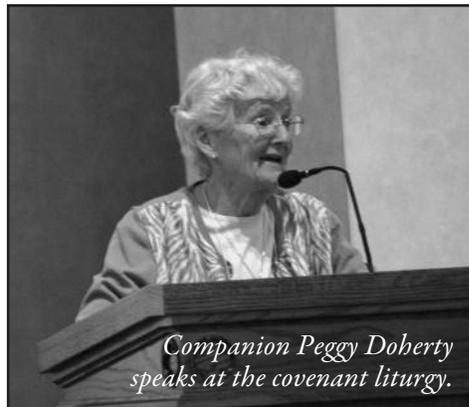
John didn't come home and tell that story to me. I heard it for the first time at his funeral. Without analyzing or putting a name to it, John spent his life living a spirituality of the Precious Blood—"For I was hungry and you fed me, naked and you clothed me, homeless and you found a home for me."

He invited younger parishioners and younger men and women that he met on his travels about town to become more actively involved in the parish or in the city. He welcomed newcomers to the parish and the city. He held no grudges, had no enemies. He forgave those who belittled him or hurt him in any way. Best of all, he loved me unconditionally and supported and encouraged me to pursue graduate studies, and in my 40s to take on a new and demanding career as our seven children grew and began to leave home.

Many of you will make your first covenant this evening. Many more will renew your covenants. When we make or renew our covenants with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, we are pledging to do the work of Jesus.

In tonight's Gospel, we heard Jesus tell Philip, "Anything you ask in my name, I will do it." John truly believed these words and acted on them. You and I, too, are capable of even greater works than Jesus did. So how can we not give our best and fulfill the promises that we make in our covenants with that kind of back-up?

Peggy Doherty is a companion with the Alameda Group. She offered this reflection at the covenant liturgy.



Assembly Planning and Dialogue

Dennis Meier

In the months preceding the assembly, the planning team asked districts and companion groups to convene twice and respond to the following questions: *What are the signs of life in our province? What can we do to enhance those signs of life? Where are the signs of life leading us or inviting us to go? What kind of leadership do we want to work with to get there?* The goal was to identify key areas of growth and life (areas of energy and passion) and to gather information to help guide the new leadership team for the next four years. The results of these gatherings were posted on the province website.

Following the straw ballot in March, members who received votes were invited to take part in a day of reflection, intended to provide them an opportunity to discern their personal commitment to leadership in relation to “signs of life.” Each participant was invited to summarize their thoughts from this day in writing, and this was also posted on the website.

The 2011 assembly topics were identified as “signs of life” at the district and companion gatherings throughout the past year and received further attention at the day of reflection. Each topic requires attention in terms of planning, resource development, evaluation, and affirmation. The environment changes, demographics change, the needs of the people we serve change. Therefore, a ministry that may have needed affirmation and support, now needs a new vision and new direction.

Throughout the past year, incorporated and companion members identified signs of life in the Kansas City Province and suggested ways to nurture them. The ministries most often mentioned fell into the following categories.

- Parish ministry
- Ministry to the marginalized
 - Volunteer ministry
- Reconciliation and renewal ministry
 - Ministry in Vietnam

The feedback also identified ways in which these ministries can be nurtured. The following list represents the areas that influence the quality of ministry and the quality of community life.

- Supporting each other through community life, (perhaps living near other members)
- Enhanced relationships to companion members
 - Reviewing the purpose and utilization of Precious Blood Center in Liberty, MO
 - Dialoguing about the future relationship with the Cincinnati Province

Any one of these categories or topics might have been the focus of discussion on the first morning of the assembly; however, participants surveyed indicated a desire to dialogue about the relationship with the Cincinnati Province.

The dialogue began in small group discussions using the Circle Process. Summaries from each group were reported to the larger group, and a large group, open forum dialogue ended the session. The dialogue was designed to be inclusive of all participants. The goal of the session was to generate ideas and recommendations for the new leadership as they implement the strategic plan for the next four years.

The ideas and recommendations that surfaced in the dialogue are listed here.

1. The relationship between the Kansas City and Cincinnati Provinces should be seen as an opportunity to create a new model that builds upon and goes beyond the current level of collaboration. There are many collaborative activities that occur routinely now, e.g., shared formation and companion membership development, and those activities should continue, as they bring the two provinces closer together.

2. The relationship is an opportunity to examine how personnel resources might be shared. One member noted that the median age among incorporated members of the Kansas City Province is 69 and the youngest candidate is 40 years old. Another member reported that the age demographic in the two provinces was actually very similar, despite the difference in numbers. This led to discussion about the future viability of the Kansas City Province. There are unanswered questions about what it will take to affirm, sustain and grow the ministries currently established in the province. Future viability is not about numbers however, one group reported.

3. This discussion reminded members that it is important to identify the unique characteristics and qualities of the Kansas City Province. Some members remarked that there is vitality in the province, despite the anxiety associated with the number of members preparing for retirement.

It was noted that the thinking and writing in *The New Wine Press* hardly reflects a preoccupation with retirement and focuses instead on the vitality of the ministries that embody the mission and vision of St. Gaspar.

4. It was recommended that a task force should be formed to study the options associated with merging and a timeline for a decision should be proposed. The response to this recommendation was that any discussion of a decision is very premature, particularly if the decision-making model follows a corporate merger model. One member suggested that the province should avoid merger language because this is not a business decision but the development of a mutually beneficial relationship with the potential for some type of integration. The focus should be on sharing gifts that bridge the two provinces. Bridging the two provinces should look very different than a corporate merger.

5. It was noted that the effort to build a strong relationship must allow for reconciliation. The separation between the two provinces had painful moments that would need to be healed.

6. Several members remarked that this dialogue raised the awareness that discernment about an issue of this magnitude must be approached through prayer, patience, open dialogue and a sincere honesty with ourselves about why we want to move in one or other direction. One member recognized that leadership may be pressed to secure the future viability of the Kansas City Province without curtailing the freedom of the individual member to pursue his chosen ministry. The “freedom to pursue” spirit has been a blessing to the province; however, it makes leadership more challenging. To pursue one course, members may have to give up the other. The Provincial and the Provincial Council may experience frustration as they hear both requests simultaneously.

7. Companion members remarked that their experiences with the companions from the Cincinnati Province have been very positive and that the relationship-building opportunities should be promoted. This also raised the question about how the decisions of the incorporated members would impact the companion members and their relationship with either province.

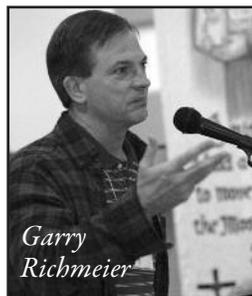
Dennis Meier was the facilitator for the planning team and the discernment process. He is a licensed professional marriage and family therapist and currently serves as the Associate Executive Director for Synergy Services, Inc., which provides residential and clinical care for runaway and homeless youth and victims of domestic violence.



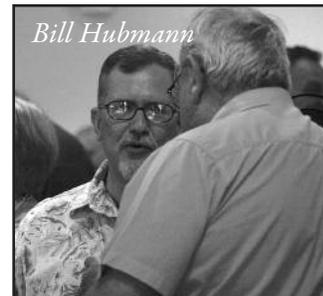
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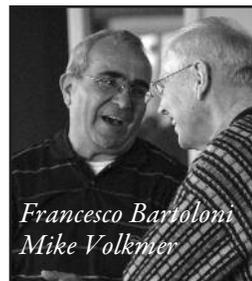
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Garry Richmeier



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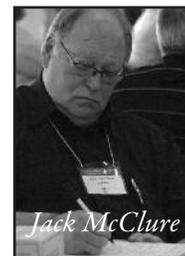
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*Becky McDonnell
Rose Pacheco
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*John Wolf
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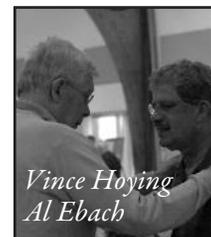


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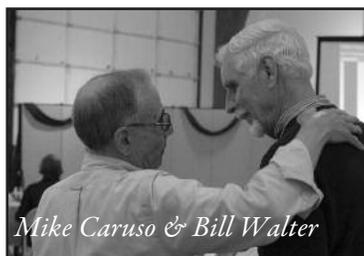
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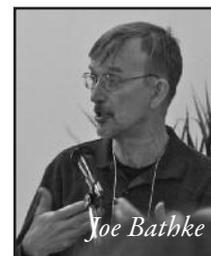
Mark Miller & Joe Nassal



*Vince Hoying
Al Ebach*



Mike Caruso & Bill Walter



Joe Bathke

A Long Distance Call

Jean Giesige

[This article first appeared in the Spring 2011 issue of "C.P.P.S. Today," published by the Cincinnati Province. It is reprinted here with permission. Jean Giesige is Director of Communications and Publications for the province.]

Young men who are entering into discernment as a priest or brother with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood are encouraged to listen to God's voice in their lives, but discouraged from looking for miraculous signs. The decision should be made more with thought and prayer, and less with the expectation of thunderbolts from heaven. Yet signs do appear. Take the story of Juan Acuña González and the elevator. But more about that later.

First of all, you have to know that when God places a call, it's not always local. From its beginning in 1815 the Congregation has been one of missionaries, and to be a missionary means movement. St. Gaspar del Bufalo, the Missionaries' founder, traveled up and down the Italian countryside preaching in rural villages that were far different from Rome, where he was born.

Fr. Francis de Sales Brunner brought the Missionaries to the United States in 1844, leaving behind his native Switzerland for the rough-and-tumble Ohio frontier. Others have followed in their spiritual footsteps, leaving their homes to establish C.P.P.S. missions in Chile, Peru, Guatemala, Colombia and other countries around the globe.

Jesus told his disciples, "there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and the sake of the Gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age" (Mark 10: 29). But even with such a promise, it's not so easy to leave a home, brothers and sisters, mother and father.

That passage speaks to Juan, who was willing to give everything up, three times over, to follow Jesus. But it wasn't until he traveled thousands of miles from home that he found what he was looking for.

"Go To College"

Juan grew up with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, who were in ministry in his home parish in Santiago, Chile. They administered San Gaspar School, which he attended as a boy. He was close to the priests at the school, including Missionaries of the Precious Blood Fr. Larry Eiting, Fr. Barry Fischer and Fr. Tom



Br. Juan Acuña, C.P.P.S.

Hemm, who inspired him, and when he told his family after graduation that he wanted to join the Missionaries, no one was surprised.

But the Missionaries told him that he needed more life experiences. Go to college, they said, and see more of the world. Juan, who has the brain of a scientist and the heart of a social worker, went to college. "I always had an aptitude for science," he said. "Math and computer courses were easy for me."

He earned a degree in civil engineering and landed a good job. But he stayed connected with his school, his parish and the Missionaries. He went with them on mission trips and to World Youth Day in Rome. There, the Moderator General of the Congregation, Fr. Barry Fischer, who had known Juan his whole life, asked him to stay and work on the Congregation's website. "In Rome I met the C.P.P.S. brothers for the first time. The vocation of brother made sense to me," Juan said. "I considered myself in discernment for the vocation of brother."

As he was learning more about the Congregation, he got news from his family in Chile that his father was ill. "I had to put everything on standby," he said. "I had to take care of my family."

He returned to Chile and helped his brother in the family business, a construction firm founded by his father, who died the following year. As much as he loved his family, it was frustrating for Juan to be traveling in reverse of the Gospel message in Mark 10. "I tried to do everything on my part to become a Missionary, but something always got in the way," he said. "I thought, 'Maybe it's not for me.'"

With the family's construction firm on solid ground, Juan took a job with the Chilean government. He enjoyed his work and was good at it, but he still kept in touch with the C.P.P.S. When he was invited to the United States to attend a symposium on the vocation of C.P.P.S. brothers in 2006, it was "the tipping point" for him.

“I went back to Chile with all these feelings, but I didn’t know what to do with them. I felt called to be a brother, but there were no C.P.P.S. brothers in Chile. If I wanted to be a brother, I would have to go to the U.S. It was one thing to join the Community, but another thing to leave your home. It was a hard choice,” he said.

He prayed “a lot,” he said. And in July 2007 he quit his job and began to dispose of most of his earthly possessions. “I sold or gave away almost all my stuff. I emptied my apartment. It was a good spiritual exercise for me,” he said.

With his laptop, his guitar and two suitcases of clothing, he set out for the United States to join a religious formation program to become a C.P.P.S. brother. The easy part was over.

A Similar Path

While Juan was wrestling with his future in Chile, three men he did not know—and who did not know each other—were on a similar path a half a world away in Vietnam. Peter Hoang Minh had moved to Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) from his home in the Vietnamese countryside after he graduated from high school. Although he had studied the Korean language and culture at the university in the hopes that it would make him more employable, he knew deep down that he had a calling to the priesthood.

Being a Catholic made him something of an anomaly in Vietnam, where Catholics make up only seven percent of the population. And being a Missionary of the Precious Blood in Vietnam, where the Kansas City Province established a mission in 2006, made him a tiny, tiny fraction of the seven percent.

“When I first heard the name of the Congregation, I thought, ‘I don’t want anything to do with that. It sounds very strange,’” Peter said. Yet the more he learned about the Missionaries, the more he was drawn to their way of life.

Like Peter, John Vianney Loi Huu Nguyen knew that he wanted to be a priest. His family had been uprooted by war and revolution. John had attended classes in a diocesan seminary, “but I had to do it quietly because the government confiscated the



Peter Hoang



John Vianney Nguyen and Joseph Vu

property of a lot of religious communities in those days,” he said.

Long before he finished his studies for the priesthood, he was forced to change course. He went to the university to study English and acupuncture, seeing it as a way to help the poor. He threw himself into ministry at his parish, where the pastors were Franciscans. Still, he felt the call to the priesthood. “It’s a long journey of faith,” he said. “If you don’t believe very strongly, you can’t go on.”

When a friend introduced him to the C.P.P.S., he thought he found the home he had been seeking. “C.P.P.S. members work with the poor and the marginalized,” he said. “They work for justice and peace. Sometimes I ask myself, ‘Why didn’t you just join the Franciscans?’ But God wanted me to do something for the people of my country in the spirit of the C.P.P.S.”

Joseph Vu Minh Truc had also studied theology with another religious congregation. He was also very involved in parish ministry, teaching religious education courses to high school students. He wondered where God was leading him, until he met the Missionaries. “The spirituality of St. Gaspar was very good for me, because I wanted to do something new. I want to heal broken relationships in society and among families,” he said.

Like the others, he had an inkling that if he continued religious formation with the C.P.P.S., he would have to leave Vietnam to do so. “We needed to complete a higher course of study in theology, and there was only one way to do that: go to the United States,” he said.

And that’s how three men who did not know each other and had never heard of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood until far into their adulthood found themselves living together in a C.P.P.S. house in Chicago, in the winter of the Great Blizzard of 2011.

Learning Curve

There is a chartable curve when one finds oneself in a foreign country, psychologists say. First, the visitor feels fascination and delight at all the new sights and sounds. All the senses are

continued on page 10...

engaged. Then, the human system is overloaded with all the new stimuli, and it experiences something of a shutdown. Reality sets in that this is not home, and that perhaps a terrible mistake has been made. While most people slowly begin to adapt to their new surroundings, it takes a long time to reach an even keel.

The men from Vietnam, who arrived in the U.S. in September of 2010, are doing amazingly well at adapting to their new surroundings, said Fr. Joe Bathke, C.P.P.S., the director of initial formation who mentors them at Gaspar House, the Congregation's house for initial formation in Chicago. Their first order of business was to improve their English so that they could enroll in advanced theology courses, and "each of them has made significant strides," Fr. Bathke said.

They learned their way around Chicago fairly easily, as they had to get from Gaspar House to their classes at DePaul University every day. They found Chicago's public transit system rather easy to navigate, compared to the full-on noisy chaos of Ho Chi Minh City, which is larger than Chicago.

Food in the U.S. is strange, they said. For Americans the default flavor choice is sweet, as opposed to very spicy or savory in Vietnam. Food combinations here can be jarring. "In Vietnam, we would never mix milk products with rice, or tomatoes with rice," John said. They also douse most dishes with a helping of hot sauce, which is always present on the table at Gaspar House.

Food is a minor concern compared to the culture, which is often bafflingly opaque. Juan Acuña can relate to that. "Some of the things they are feeling upon coming to the U.S., I felt too," he said. "Your prayer is, 'God, help me understand. Help me communicate.' Because one of the first things you struggle with is the language. You try to get your message across, but in the end you find yourself praying, 'God, help me!'"

The Congregation takes steps to make its international candidates feel at home. When Juan came to the U.S., his formators made sure the DVD players at Gaspar House would work with DVDs manufactured in Chile. Everyone at the house tried Chilean dishes and listened to Chilean music. For the men from Vietnam, Fr. Bathke has found a doctor in Chicago who speaks Vietnamese, and also a Vietnamese spiritual director.

Still, things that a native takes for granted can seem so strange to someone new to the culture. Juan said one of the hardest things for him to learn was American humor. "What people find funny here might not be funny at home," he said. "There's no manual for that. You have to experiment and be around people to learn it."

Not that the serious stuff is easy. Advanced theological courses are very difficult, even more so when taught in a second language. "I made up my mind that I was going to do my best," Juan said. "And so when I passed my courses with As, I was a little impressed

with myself. You go from being at the very bottom of the class to some level of understanding. Every little victory gives you more confidence."

Juan and the Elevator

What also gives them confidence is the conviction that they are on a path that God has set. "Everything is rooted in my prayer life," said Juan, who was temporarily incorporated into the C.P.P.S. last August, in a ceremony that his mother was able to attend. "I chose this path, this life, and that implies surrender to God. I left my home and my family, but I left with a sense of trust. At the center of everything I do is the conviction that God has asked me to do this, so God will help me through."

And that brings us back to Juan and the elevator story, which involves a sign. It happened as he was making his decision about his third try to join the Missionaries, while he was still at work in the government agency in Santiago.

"I was at work one day, on the seventh floor, waiting for the elevator. Another guy from a different floor stepped out of the elevator and he asked me, 'Juan, do you know where I can find Fr. Larry Eiting Street?' He had been invited to some celebration on that street. Now, this is a street in front of one of our Precious Blood parishes, and it is about one block long. "In the whole big city of Santiago, I found it so weird that this guy was asking me about Fr. Larry Eiting Street. 'Yeah, I know the street,' I said, and I gave him directions. And for me, that was a sign: Fr. Larry Eiting was saying, 'Stop thinking about it, and just do it.'"



The New Creation

Reflections from the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation

I wrote about Robert in the March 2010 issue of *The New Wine Press*. He had just been placed in Boys Town, hoping to find a loving and supportive family, a big void in his life on the run. After a rough beginning, which included several thwarted attempts to run away, Robert finally settled in, enjoying his freshman year at high school, playing on the football team, going to summer camp, and just being a kid for the first time in his life.

This past Christmastime, Robert earned his first opportunity to return to Chicago for a visit, and one of his wishes was to go to a Northwestern University basketball game. Robert is the Wildcat's #1 fan, having attended many a football and basketball game with me as part of PBMRs Mentoring Program.

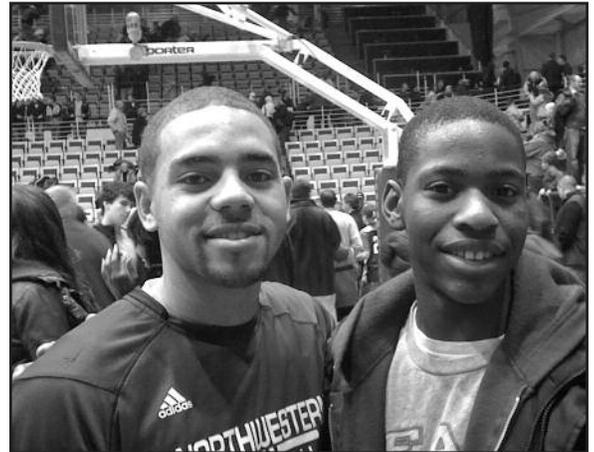
With the help of Dr. Jim Phillips, Director of Athletics and Recreation at Northwestern University, and Nora O'Connor, a Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation volunteer at the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, it was arranged for Robert to meet his favorite player, Michael (Juice) Thompson, after the game. Michael is the team's star senior point guard, a native of Chicago. We did not tell Robert of our plan in advance, so when the game ended on a winning note for the Wildcats, Robert was ushered down to the court, and much to his surprise, Robert met his hero. Michael listened as Robert told him all about his life at Boys Town and shared with him his knowledge of all things Northwestern University football and basketball.

Robert failed to mention that in an attempt to embellish upon his life's story, he told his football coach back at Boys Town that Michael Thompson was his brother. I know this because on one of my trips to watch Robert play football this fall, I was asked by his coach whether this was true. Robert had told him quite a tale, with an interesting back story and lots of detail. As much as I hated to, I gave Robert up, since I couldn't stop laughing. Actually, I've come to understand that many of Robert's tall tales are a defense mechanism to cover up for the harsh life he's led.

After their chat, Michael excused himself, went back to the locker room, and returned with gifts for Robert, including his warm up jersey, socks, and a brand new pair of basketball shoes. Robert, never at a loss for words, was rendered speechless. This was his best Christmas gift ever!

When Robert got back "home" to Boys Town he wrote Juice a thank you note which Michael shared with his family. His Mom said the note literally brought tears to her family's eyes. She said in

part, "I do recall seeing Michael talking to Robert at the end of the game, and I just thought it was another fan. But when I saw Michael bring out the shoes and clothes and found out the situation, I teared up. My husband and I have taught all of our children to have compassion for



Robert McFall (r) and his Northwestern University friend Micheal (Juice) Thompson

those less fortunate, no matter what their age or race. I know Michael got a kick out of doing something so small to others, but huge for some. Michael will gladly write his 'little brother' a few words. Maybe he could make one more game, or even spend time with Michael in the summer." After reading her note, it was my time to tear up.

Robert's bedroom, which is adorned with Northwestern purple memorabilia, now includes a photo of Robert and his "big brother."

A lot has changed for Robert in the year he's been at Boys Town. He has found a loving and nurturing family teacher, and he's doing well behaviorally, academically and athletically (he recently made the track team). Tragically, back in Chicago, one of his half-brothers died unexpectedly in February—but now Robert has the necessary support to pull him through this loss. After years on the run, the only running he's doing is around a track.

Mike Donovan is a staff member of PBMR.

*On The Run
No More*

Mike Donovan

The New Wine Press

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My Back Pages

Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.

Memorial Day
Of every year
The little valiant
Flags appear
On every fallen
Soldier's grave—
Symbol of what
Each died to save.
And we who see
And still have breath—
Are we no wiser
For their death?

Unlearned Lesson

Dorothy Brown Thompson

“Neither our own passing nor the passing of an era is a tragedy, no matter how much we would like to think it is. If there is any human tragedy, there is only one, and it occurs when we forget who we are and remain silent while a stranger takes up residence inside our skin.”

The Glass Rainbow

James Lee Burke

In early May, my father had the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. along with about 90 other World War II veterans to visit the memorials dedicated to those who served in the wars of the last century. It included as well a visit to Arlington National Cemetery, where so many other veterans ended their earthly journey. These trips (at no cost) are sponsored by the Honor Flight Network, which is dedicated to helping every possible veteran to visit and experience *their* memorial, knowing of their sacrifice and also aware that this generation is passing rapidly into grateful memory. Coincidentally, five days later my father celebrated his 90th birthday (with a modest gathering of about 170 family and friends).

I can't help but reflect on this family experience in the context of Memorial Day. It has its origins in a ritual of remembrance and reconciliation following the Civil War, but is today also an occasion for visiting cemeteries, remembering, perhaps mourning the loss of someone or the passing of another generation.

Too many people have died or been terribly damaged physically and emotionally in too many wars. They are all deserving of grateful memory. As are those who survived and went on to live lives of further service, building families and communities, often holding their painful memories of war within. Elsewhere in this issue, Peggy Doherty reflects on our call to “do great things.” My father and late mother and millions of others are often called “The Greatest Generation.” To my mind, this doesn't mean that they were better than any other generation, but rather that they did great things, living ordinary lives extraordinarily. Integrity, faith, sacrifice, dedication to family.

On the website of the Honor Flight Network is a quote from Will Rogers: “We can't all be heroes. Some of us have to stand on the curb and clap as they go by.” But that cannot be the end of it. We are all called to “ordinary greatness.” The sacrifice of so many will indeed have been in vain, if we do not work for reconciliation and renewal. “Greatness” happens when we are willing to do extraordinary things in ordinary ways, when remember who we are, when we learn from the past, and when we see the passing of an era as a gift to the present and the future.

“Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these.... And whatever you ask in my name, I will do....If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it” (John 12-14).
