



# The New Wine Press

*Motivated by the Spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ*

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Volume 22 No. 9  
May 2013



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## *It Doesn't Have Me*

*Dewey McConville, Kansas City Province Wellness Committee*

Who would you consider the lepers of 2013? Who are the unfortunate souls that our society considers incurable, ugly to glance upon, and possibly contagious to healthy society? As a physician assistant who has practiced in rural Iowa for twenty-three years, I am convinced that those with mental illness have become our modern-day lepers. If one of our patients has a heart attack, three bigger hospitals will vie for the chance to send a helicopter immediately, but if this same patient is critically ill with depression, there will be an eight-hour wait to try to obtain a transfer admission. In some places, the ER wait can be weeks.

Our son Dr. Brad McConville, Jr. tells us that it is even worse in New Orleans. The governor ordered the closure of the 340-bed Southeast Louisiana State Hospital for the mentally ill. A public outcry caused a change in plans, and SELH was sold to a private, for-profit company. In less than one year, the number of available beds and critical staff positions has been reduced, leaving only a skeleton crew to provide services. Brad is the only remaining staff

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psychiatrist at this time, and he is very frustrated with the changes. Low patient census also jeopardizes the future of the psychiatric residency training programs. Most of all, the most vulnerable of patients are deprived of the sustained help that they need. Many hospitals across the country have greatly decreased their number of psychiatric beds, or closed their psychiatric units completely, citing poor reimbursement from the government and third party insurers.

Sadly, this is true. Even people with health insurance face unequal or no benefits for mental health and substance abuse care. Over eleven million U.S. adults affected by mental illness have no insurance coverage of any kind. If hospitals and clinics receive little or no reimbursement, they must decrease services.

Because of poor third party reimbursement, fewer physicians choose psychiatry as their specialty. Most physicians graduate with over \$200,000 in loans, and are forced to choose medical careers that will enable them to service their debt and live relatively comfortable lives. Psychiatric residency programs in this country often go unfilled.

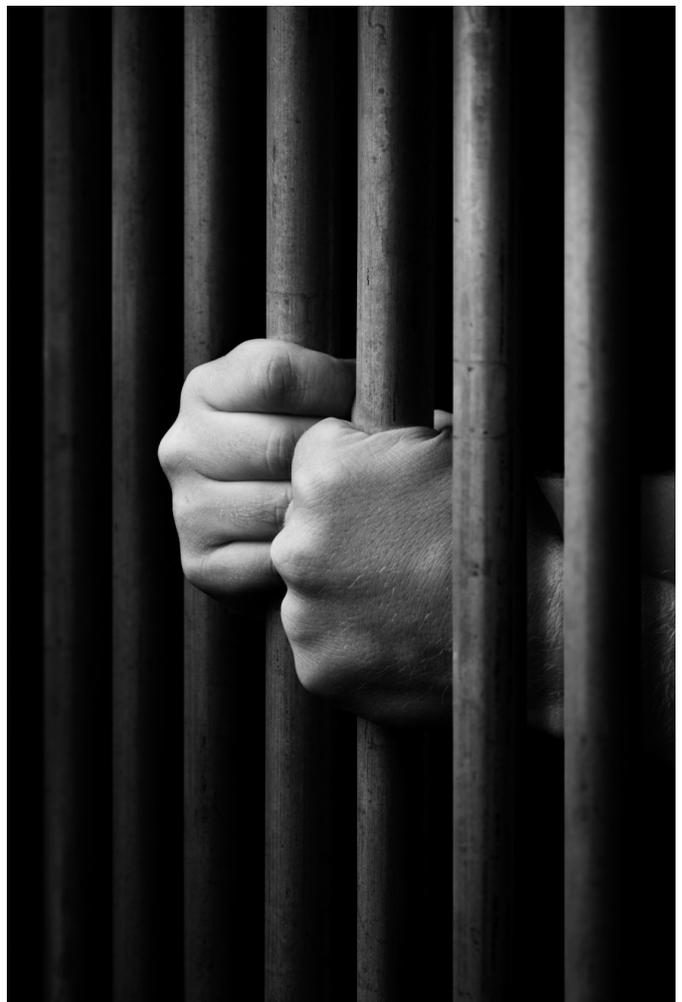
The Affordable Care Act, which goes into full effect in January 2014, should enable more citizens to obtain health insurance. The Mental Health Parity and Substance Abuse Equity Act was passed in 2008, yet we still have no enforcement of this law because the legislative rules have not yet been written! Five years later, insurance companies still deny mental health treatment payments, and patients wait months for services. As state hospitals have been closed all over the country, the number of patients requiring treatment has skyrocketed.

When people are diagnosed with mental illness, finding effective medical and psychiatric care is the first priority. But once such treatment begins, they need more than medical help. A combined treatment plan includes family and community support, transitional residential programs, supportive employment opportunities, and ongoing therapy. No single, coordinated system of services for mental health care exists in the United States. We have clearly delineated standards of care for cardiac and intensive care units, for example, but the mentally ill person requires his/her treatment plan to be tailored to a specific situation. This makes regulatory standards difficult to devise and enforce.

The school tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut last December has brought the issue of the mental health crisis to the national spotlight. Or has it? So far, strict

new gun control laws have been enacted in several states. But the fact that mental illness is an epidemic in this country is amazingly still overlooked, according to Brian Marshall of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness.). There is also the stigma that persons with mental illness are all “crazy.” This ignorance of the public at large makes it difficult for many mentally ill people to get help for fear of being labeled. Even if people risk the loss of job and social status to get the help they need, will they have access to treatment? It is far easier to buy a gun in this country than it is to get mental health care.

Many of these “lepers” are now living in our country’s largest mental health institutions, namely, our jails and prisons. Department of Corrections officials agree that many of the imprisoned would benefit more from mental health services than from incarceration. But what will our society say about spending the funds to make this happen? Research has shown that enrolling patients with programs like ACT (Assertive Community Treatment) early in the course of illness is far more effective and cheaper in the long run than incarceration.



What would St. Gaspar say about all of this? The spirituality of the Blood impelled him and continues to impel us to walk with these marginalized persons. Besides speaking out for just treatment of those with mental illness, we can simply share our charism with them. We all know persons who suffer from some form of mental illness. The first step is to *talk* to them. Ask them how they are doing, and really *listen* to what they have to say. Let them know that you care, and that you understand that mental illness is a disease like diabetes or hypertension. There is nothing to be ashamed of, and they are *not* failures. Welcome them into your lives, inviting them to social events and into our faith community. A 2009 NAMI survey revealed that prayer and spirituality is a primary component in recovery. We can help them experience the healing power of the Blood by truly becoming part of their lives.

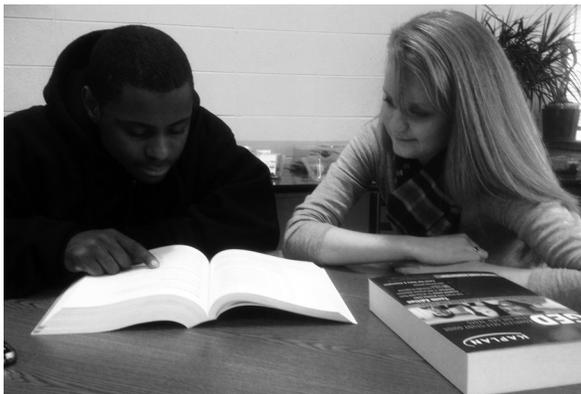
Donita Cline recently described her battle in a poem printed in the Spring 2013 issue of NAMI *Voice* newsletter. I will conclude by sharing her words.

“On the worst days I feel cursed. I’m high, spinning round and round but looking down, down. I can fly and I want to die. On these days, I have the strength to walk the plank. However, if I really wanted to die, I’d already be dead; I am the cowboy riding the rodeo in my head. I have bipolar, but it doesn’t have me.”

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### The New Wine Press

*Missionaries of the Precious Blood*

Kansas City Province

[www.kcprovince.org](http://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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## *Just Around the Corner*

*Fr. Jack McClure, C.P.P.S.*

On April 7<sup>th</sup> there was a monthly gathering for members at Precious Blood Center in Liberty. We began with beverages and supper and ended with conversation. Our conversation focused on the times of Gaspar and contemporary similarities. Then, on Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, members who reside and work in the Diocese of Kansas City gathered at Precious Blood Center for lunch and discussion with leadership to consider what could be around the corner.

We had a lively discussion, with good suggestions of possibility and hope. I heard a desire to minister where we are. I heard support to share our resources and assist others in seeking and gaining spiritual growth. We want to do the work of renewal and reconciliation. We believe there is much Work of the Blood to be done. We are proud of the investments of our Human Development and Scholarship funds. We don't know what is around the corner, but we want to do our part. We have the resources, and we'd like to use them. Our time ended with the declaration that there is need for much more of this

kind of conversation. And I'm not sure it is going to be an easy conversation to have. We don't know how to look around corners. The world is changing, and it feels like there's a corner to turn. It's happened before.

Have you, by any chance, become acquainted with the television show "Downton Abbey"? At the invitation of a good friend, I recently watched an episode from the second season. Initially I thought it was an upscale soap opera (and it is), but I found myself interested in the attitudes and perspectives of people involved in a major shift of thought and experience. Downton Abbey's story line compares quite interestingly to the challenges of a changing worldview in our church and nation.

Set in Britain in the early 1900s, the series is a drop-in view of a privileged family and the paid servant staff that provides, sustains, and maintains the privilege of the upper class during a time of turmoil and change. The aristocracy was crumbling from within. Technology was mushrooming and social changes were disturbing



*Upstairs servants at a Killkenney mansion, approx. 1908.*

and frightening, both to the privileged and unprivileged. Opulence and extravagance come at a considerable cost, not always reflected in dollars or pounds. Privilege is lived on the anonymous backs of many.

A century later, professional storytellers have inserted Downton Abbey's story line into our Sunday night lives, and the show has a great following. In terms of the Church there is the lavishness of lacy albs, red shoes, tall hats, flowing gowns, and precious metals for goblets. The esteemed clergy is used to the "Upstairs" privilege and gentility while the laity muddles around in the basement, some begrudging the privilege, while others continue to give from their want and can't see why the privileged don't deserve it. In the political and civic arena, the congress, the elected officials, and statesmen live upstairs, fattened and sustained by the privilege afforded them by the common citizens who repeatedly elect and re-elect them to office while they legislate forever benefits and privilege for their terms of supposed service.

There are other contemporary signs that are flashing themselves at us. We are a nation built on the backs of immigrants, a nation that welcomed the immigrant. The famous words on the Statue of Liberty at times ring hollow today: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, the tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" Do you find it as disconcerting as I do that so many people have crawled into the bed of rejection touted by fearful citizens and legislators? Surely we

have not evolved so far from our ancestors as to fail to remember that almost all of us hearken back to distant shores ourselves. Our Church cared for and protected those seeking to find their way in a new world in times past. Sadly, some doors today don't open as easily as they should for those seeking their daily bread. Our lamp is not always held high to welcome and light the way.

There is much to talk about and even more to do as we turn the corner into a new way of being the People of God, of being a Community. In 2015 we celebrate two hundred years of Gaspar's founding of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and fifty years of being the Kansas City Province. Much has changed since 1815, and most rapidly since 1965. Our province's hope is that our celebrations and remembrances will inspire and encourage us to give voice to Gaspar's desire, "I wish I had a thousand tongues to move all hearts to toward the most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ."

There will be things to remember, pictures to look at, gathering of symbols and memorabilia, stories to tell, and dreams to dream. There will be celebrations and gatherings to commemorate the Work of St. Gaspar, the Work of the Blood, and the Work of our Province. We will hope for times to wonder and consider and to dream and to do. We pray that this is an opportunity for us to listen and reflect on St. Gaspar's continuing contribution to renewal and reconciliation, a time to lift high the life-giving light of Christ and to push our boat out into the deep and live our way into another way of being Members, Companions, and Volunteers of the Blood of Christ.



*Fr. George Fey working with the poor, approx. 1950.*

## Preaching to Vampires 2

Fr. Keith Branson, C.P.P.S., Chaplain at Avila University

My first installment focused on *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, a popular series of books that inspired the HBO series *True Blood*. I write this installment after having read the *The Vampire Chronicles Collection: Volume 1* by Anne Rice and about 3½ volumes of Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series. These three works almost belong to different genres, despite being part of a new literary category, with different types of stories being told and different approaches to what vampirism means.

*The Vampire Chronicles* falls into the category of feigned history, as Tolkien would describe it, and the *Twilight* series is almost a pure young adult romance with no larger message. However, there are common themes that bear notice as markers of today's culture as a whole.

The absence of Redemption is found in Chapter 14 of *The Vampire Lestat*. An older vampire is talking to Lestat about the possibility of revelation to humanity, and says: "But what would it matter to reveal anything to anyone? No one can forgive. No one can redeem. It's a childish illusion to think so. Reveal yourself and be destroyed, and what have you done? The Savage Garden would swallow your remains in pure vitality and silence. Where is there justice and understanding?"

A suspicion against full disclosure is present in most every time in human history, the need to protect our inmost secrets. There is a limit to how much we should share, a suspicion of sharing in an unprotected way. It runs against our faith, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians: "At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known" (1 Cor 13:12).

There is no safe environment for self-disclosure in many places, so the challenge of hospitality and creating safe places to be open about ourselves is a vital one. It's appropriate that we as a Precious Blood community are seeking to create such places.

This is a byproduct of vampiric relationships in general: there are almost no equal relationships in these universes. There is a bond between a vampire and his or her creator (the one who made them a vampire), to the point of absolute obedience in some cases. In all three series, there is no larger vampiric community, no positive grouping other than the coven, and these small groups are based around a powerful leader who gives the group

direction. One-to-one equal relationship between vampires are limited, perhaps because there is little to share with one another that is life giving. For them, sharing blood can be a way to power, and at most is the ultimate means of conversion, but they will only do this rarely and it's almost always motivated by passion. Sharing power isn't something that's done casually.

Many older vampires routinely hunt down and destroy newly created vampires as potential threats, and turning a child into a vampire is a recipe for disaster.

Individual relationships between vampires and humans are problematic in many ways: one is practically immortal, the other isn't; one is superhuman, the other is ordinary. Vampires tend to be physically beautiful, because the vampires that create them are drawn to physical beauty; I have yet to read about an ugly vampire. The affection isn't quite like the affection a farmer has for his livestock, but it could be in the same ballpark.

The vampire's struggle with emotions is grist for a lot of the stories. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the vampire's humanity is eaten away until all that is left is hunger. That hunger is refined and civilized, the goal of all thought and action, but Dracula's purpose is to consume. He had no self-doubts about what he was doing or his purpose in life. Almost all the vampires in these novels had reservations about making others vampires. Rosalie puts it to Bella in Chapter 7 of *Eclipse* this way: "Would you like to hear my story, Bella? It doesn't have a happy ending—but which of ours does? If we had happy endings, we'd all be under gravestones now."

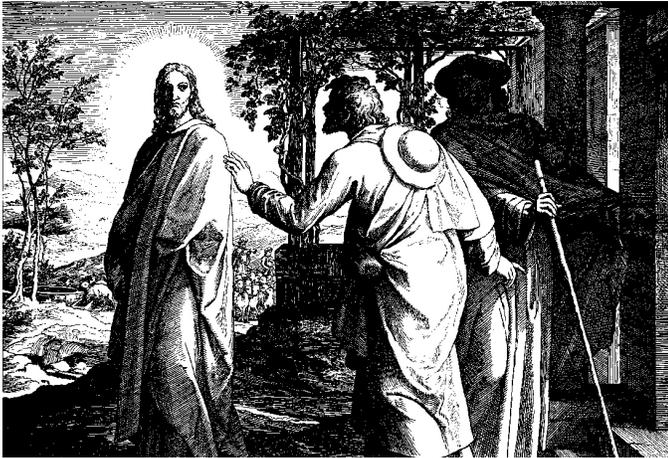
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Illustration from *Carmilla* by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, 1872.

# Peace Presence at PBMR

by Sr. Carolyn Hoying, C.P.P.S., Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation



Engraving by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 1860.

The Scripture readings during this Easter Season are filled with such surprises for us. The disciples had dropped everything to follow Jesus. After his death, they had returned to their trades, but Jesus did not abandon them. After his resurrection, he met them in their ministry at the seashore, on their journey to Emmaus, and in their preaching, even in the prison. He is with us in our ministry as well—wherever that might be.

The timing—or was it a call—was right. I was finishing a sabbatical. Seeds were planted when I took Circle Training with Fr. Dave Kelly and Sr. Donna Liette. Then last October the Dayton Peace and Justice Office invited Fr. Dave to speak on Restorative Justice in Dayton. Sr. Donna and some of the juvenile boys came with him; I was in attendance. The next morning I went to meet with Fr. Dave and Sr. Donna at Salem Heights to find out more about their ministry at PBMR and discern if I might be a fit. The ministry at PBMR interested me, especially to be another C.P.P.S. support and presence for Sr. Donna. Being a part of a Precious Blood collaborative ministry of presence to juvenile boys was also a big draw. The redeeming love of Jesus caught my spirit and sent me forth to the south side of Chicago in the Back of the Yards to be a reconciling, life-giving presence to those that I would meet at PBMR.

I arrived last November. On my second day there, staff member Mike Donovan was held at gunpoint (which he described in last month's article). The following day, Jonathan and Lamonte, the Center's two young employees, went to pick up boxes of food from Trader Joe's. We

sorted and bagged the food, which was later given out to the homeless from the neighborhood—a weekly event.

That same evening, a Peace and Healing Mass was held at Holy Cross and Immaculate Heart of Mary Church for the families who had anyone die as a result of violence. Sister Donna and I took one of the boys from the Center with us to the service. Ushers invited us to take a white cross and inscribe the names of friends we knew who had died to violence. I asked the youth if he had lost anyone in this way. He said eight, including his brother. The experience of writing names on the cross was powerful. I could somehow relate to the grief the young 16 year-old next to me had in losing eight friends to violence last year. It boggled my mind, however, that this young individual had time to grieve, be healed and in the process forgive the offender when the tragedies occurred over and over again to friends. Many of the youth at the Center had similar stories to tell of losing friends to gun violence. I'm not sure how many have a chance to grieve, heal or forgive or if resources are made available for them to deal with their tragedies.

The next day was Juvenile Day, as Sr. Donna called it. I wondered if I would be allowed to participate on such short notice. To my surprise, I was given clearance to get into the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center, and Sr. Donna and I visited juveniles that evening. It took a little time for my heart to adjust from being with young, vibrant and focused kids at St. John the Evangelist School in Colorado, as well as the young women I had encountered in vocation work, to seeing all these young girls and boys locked up. Something seemed wrong here. What were their choices now, what happened to them in this place? I immediately looked forward to being with them again the next week. It is a privilege to encounter Christ in them—something we seek in our walk as a disciple of the risen Christ.

I have learned a lot since I came to the Precious Blood Center. Every time I drive one of the kids home from the Center, or to the bank, or even to the grocery store, I learn the importance of asking if it is safe for them to be there. Three weeks ago I was taking one of the boys to get his check cashed. On my way back to the Center, I attempted to turn down one of the side streets, but my passenger said not to turn. When I asked why, he said,

## A Bunch of Clowns

Fr. Timothy Armbruster, C.P.P.S., Regional Vocation Director



### What changes one from *this...*

Very simply, a whole lot of makeup and a big smile.

On a brisk January day, I had the opportunity to travel to Albia, Iowa, to speak with the K-12 grade classes about vocations. With the 5th grade and under students I shared my story of becoming a clown, and for the older students we talked about “What would I like to be when I grow up?” or “What would God like me to be when I grow up?” It was a great delight to share my story once again.

As the night ended, we had time for the youth and adults to ask questions. The very last question caught me short. I had a high school student ask, “What does clowning have to do with the priesthood?” In my mind, I quickly went through all the reasons and answers I could give. I thought of the story of our community and our provincial and then moderator general, Fr. Danny Schaefer, who would often refer to us—with affection—as “A bunch of clowns.” I thought of the many clown events that I have done over the years, all the many clown skits I have been involved with and have made happen. As I



### to *this?*

began to speak, I quickly rattled off all those ideas, and nothing really clicked. I finally just had to end because my time was up. I’m not sure if I answered his question or not. Later that night, I continued to think about what I had said. One simple answer that I could have given, but failed to share, was, “Clowns invite us to see life in a whole different way. They challenge us to step back and look again. They focus us on the obvious even if we refuse to see it. They poke fun at us even if it is a bit unsettling. The true gift of a clown is his or her heart.”

The heart of a true clown is limitless, open love given without expectation of any reward more precious than a smile. The true clown touches our very soul with grace and ease. The true clown speaks a universal language of love, that unspoken poetry of the heart. We believe it is no coincidence that the clown and Christ reside in that same unique place.

The gift of a clown is shared through a storyline. Just as Jesus taught his followers through parables, through stories, so too does a clown teach. At least if not teach,

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calls to mind events of life and how we deal with it and respond to it. A clown teaches charity as he gives a hungry bird his last morsel of bread. A clown teaches hope as he carefully catches a snowflake and wraps it neatly in a tattered and soiled handkerchief. A clown teaches humility and gratitude as he prays a heartfelt blessing over a boiled shoe placed on a bare dinner plate. A clown through his or her innocence allows us to peer beyond our own selves into our souls, our own humanity, to stop and realize our own failings and weaknesses. A clown also brings us great joy and laughter as he or she awakens within us the gift of joy.

I once watched as an old clown shuffled off stage without uttering a word. As he removed his trappings and baggy clothes, he reappeared as a tired old man without anyone to sit with. No money in his pockets. He even folded his hands in prayer but then looked up and making a fist made a sweeping motion like “Who cares!” He found a chair and just collapsed into it as if he had given up. I watched as a small child then approached him and just stood there. After a few moments, the old man finally noticed him. The young child held up and handed him a cutout paper heart. The old man received not only the heart but the young child as well and embraced. The young child then pulled the old man off stage as he waved to all with a great big smile and the silent words, “Thank you” on his lips. No words could capture the power of that moment. When all seemed lost, unappreciated, someone noticed. I truly felt the presence of God there in that room that night. There wasn’t a dry eye to be found as each one of us recognized in ourselves the times we feel unappreciated, tired, worn out, unloved, and yet we each find something to draw us up and out of ourselves to keep sharing what we love to do—namely, sharing God’s word.

“What does clowning have to do with the priesthood?” For me it has everything to do with it. Each time that I preach or share my story I’m pulling from my life experience, I’m pulling from scripture and putting it all together to see life in a different way. We are each challenged to reflect on the world around us, and as a community committed to bringing renewal and reconciliation. Sometimes we just need to see things a bit differently. Preaching and clowning in some ways are a lot alike, as we draw on the humor and tragedies of life to find God present and to make God known to others. Some people have the gift to do it with words others have the gift to do it with actions. Either way, we have a story to share.

### *Preaching to Vampires 2, continued from page 6*

Vampires are almost universally contemptuous of their state, and generally don’t want to inflict it on someone else. These stories make creation of a vampire more difficult than a simple vampire bite, so it’s more of a conscious choice than in *Dracula*, but being a vampire is never seen as good, or something to invite others to become. In *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, people who want to be like vampires are called “Fangbangers” and looked on as pathetic. In *The Vampire Lestat*, they are rock fans caught up in a fad.

Identifying something we want to pass on, something of ourselves we want to give as a legacy, is something we all do. In our case as Precious Blood Community, we don’t want our mission to die with us. Self-doubt and examination of conscience are part of a healthy spirituality, but what part of ourselves are we willing to share with those who will carry the mission forward? Do we feel our lives are worth giving to someone else?

### *Peace Presence at PBMR, continued from page 7*

“I don’t want rocks and stones thrown at your car.” I said I was so sorry to hear what he was telling me; it was so out of my window of life. I can go anywhere, cross any street and not have to live in fear of crossing boundaries.

The PBMR staff thought I might be gone by the end of my first week because of all that happened. I am still here months later and feel so in awe of every aspect of this mission. The boys have been so welcoming and supportive of me being in their presence. There has not been a dull moment since that first week. I came to PBMR with an open heart, to be community, work collaboratively and be a life-giving reconciling presence to the young boys and others who enter this sacred place of peace. The seed that was planted during the Circle Training in Dayton is growing in grace and knowledge of a world so different from my past experience, where life seems hopeless and yet filled with hope and Easter surprises. My heart is full of the goodness, forgiveness and mercy of God. I am blest to be in this Precious Blood collaborative ministry. “May not one drop of precious blood be shed in vain?”



## *Filled With Hope*

*Vicki Otto, LGBT Ministry Committee*

Every year throughout the United States hundreds of students graduate from school. And every year hundreds of graduation ceremonies take place. I always love the speeches that the graduates offer to their classmates. It doesn't matter if the speech was given 15 years ago or last year, each speech is full of optimism and promise for the future. After hearing their speeches, one cannot help but be filled with hope.

After watching the events on March 14, 2013 surrounding the election of Pope Francis and reading the remarks he has made to the public, one cannot help but be filled with that same sense of hope. From the moment of his first appearance as pope it was not what he said but what he wore that spoke volumes. When offered the traditional papal red cape trimmed with ermine that his predecessors wore for ceremonial occasions he said, "No thank you." One of the pope's first comments echoed that of the saint whose name he chose. He said that he wished for "a church that was both poor and for the poor." Vatican reporter John Allen remarked that the choice of the name of Francis sent a clear message to the church about the new pope's intention to let "the church of the spirit, a humble and simple community of equals with a special love for the least of the world...shine through."

Pope Francis continued to bring to life his intention to serve those on the edge of society on Holy Thursday, by celebrating the beginning of the Easter Triduum not in one of the grand churches in Rome but in a juvenile detention center. There he washed the feet of twelve young men and women. When asked why he came he said, "Where are those who perhaps could help me more to be humble, to be a servant as a bishop should be?" In his homily at the Chrism Mass on March 28, when speaking about the anointing of the priesthood, he said, "The Lord will say this clearly: his anointing is meant for the poor, prisoners and the sick, for those who are sorrowing and alone. The ointment is not intended just to make us fragrant, much less to be kept in a jar, for then it would become rancid...and the heart bitter." He continued by charging priests to be like "shepherds who are so close to their flocks that they smell like their sheep." He concluded his comments with a charge to everyone: "It is not a bad thing that reality itself forces us to 'put out into the deep,' where what we are by grace is clearly seen as pure grace, out into the deep of the contemporary world, where the only thing that counts is 'unction'—not function—and the nets which overflow with fish are those cast solely in the name of the One in whom we put our trust: Jesus."

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After reflecting on the writings and homilies of Pope Francis over the last few weeks, one cannot help but wonder if Saint Gaspar, Blessed Maria Mattias, and all the other members of the Precious Blood community who have gone before us in faith are cheering in heaven for the Pope's commitment to stand with and care for those who stand on the fringes of our world. By his words and his actions, one can hope for many things. One can hope for honest and loving dialogue led by Pope Francis about the lack of hospitality shown to our brothers and sisters in Christ who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered. One can hope that our brothers and sisters begin to feel acknowledged, loved, and cherished for the gifts they are to the Church, instead of feeling unloved and unwelcomed in their Church. One can hope that Pope Francis has set a new standard of dialogue based on love and compassion in our Church that will replace the political rancor and harsh rhetoric that has often been used to describe our brothers and sisters who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered.

We cannot imagine what the future holds for our Church. All we know for sure is that at this moment in the Church's history, there is a new sense of hope. Let us join him in continuing to "cast our nets out into the deep—in the name of the one in whom we put our trust: Jesus."

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*Leadership, continued from page 12*

into covenant, we enter into a relationship with God and with one another. We put our lives on the line. We trust God will take care of us even if the plan is not yet clear to us.

This is the difficult part, because God's mind is impossible to read. This was often the problem the religious leaders had with Jesus—they could not put him in their small frame of mind they had constructed for themselves based on the law, rubrics, and rules. They needed a larger frame. "Thinking outside the box" has become a cliché, but trusting in God's promises invite us to think, pray, listen, believe, and trust in a larger frame. God asked Abraham to think outside the frame of old age to believe in new possibilities. Jesus asks us to do the same because the larger the frame, the more possibilities there are.

Recently I heard a speaker raise three questions to revitalize congregations. Though the questions are meant for churches and parishes, they also apply to religious communities. The first question, "Why does our congregation exist?" was asked of me by a seminarian from the

diocese who was sitting next to me at the banquet before the Chrism Mass. I told him our charism is the renewal of the church and the reconciliation of the peoples through the blood of Christ. Since he was not familiar with our community in the diocese, I told him about the parishes we serve, that they are places where the vision of Vatican II is lived in vibrant ways. I reflected on the reconciliation ministry in Chicago. He did not seem overly impressed, but because he was going to be a server at the Chrism Mass, he was rescued from my stories by the master of ceremonies who needed him for rehearsal!

The second question is, "What breaks God's heart in our community?" Now there is a question that takes us deeper into the mystery of our relationship with one another. I know what breaks my heart; but do I know how your heart has been broken? Sometime ago I came across a story of two members in a religious community who have known each other for years. They considered each other good friends. One day, one of them says to the other, "John, do you love me?" And the other, not fully grasping the depth of his friend's question says, "Bill, you know that I do." After a long silence, John says to Bill, "How can you love me when you don't know what hurts me? Do you know what breaks my heart?"

And the last question is a good one for dialogue around the dinner table or at a district meeting: "Name one spiritually transforming moment you personally experienced in the last year?" One of those for me was meeting the widow of a 50-year old man who died suddenly of a heart attack. She and her two children, one in high school and the other a freshman in college, were devastated and grieving this terrible loss. She came to the retreat to help with her grief. She told me the story of her son, the freshman in college, who at his father's funeral said to the brokenhearted congregation, "Dad, you gave me your name. It is the greatest gift you gave me. I will do my best to carry your name with the integrity, compassion, and love that you lived."

It is clear that at a very young age, that young man understands the meaning of covenant. And so did Father George Fey. He embraced and lived the name, Missionary of the Precious Blood throughout his life. May his spirit continue to inspire us to always be open to change because we trust in the covenant we have with one another and with our loving God. It is because of this covenant in the blood of Christ that we are called to be agents of transformation in our church and in our world.

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### Leadership Team

# *Covenant: Being Open to Change*

*Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S., Provincial Director*

When Father George Fey died on March 14, we lost one of our great missionaries. When we started the Justice and Peace committee in 1981, he would arrive at the meetings with a suitcase full of books and leave them behind for me to read. Each book contained the background information I would need to address the justice and peace issues we were facing in the world, not only with Gospel truth but also with insight from the world's best teachers committed to making the world a better place.

As his obituary reflected, Father George was a trailblazer—and the letters we have received from our C.P.P.S. members in Chile attest that he will be remembered as one of our first Precious Blood missionaries in Chile. He was not a young man when he also became one of the first priests of our province to go to Texas as pastor in San Angelo. But he was a good choice, not only because of his ability to speak Spanish, but also because of his missionary zeal.

After many years in parish work, Father George had a long career as a hospital chaplain. Until his mind betrayed him the past few years, George was a man of deep conviction and passion that was never afraid to change his mind if it meant the kingdom of God would be proclaimed. That is my fondest memory of serving with George on the justice and peace committee more

than thirty years ago: he was passionate about peace and justice and he was always open to new possibilities.

Change is always difficult, especially as we grow older, but if we want a model of someone who was never afraid to change, we can look to people like Father George Fey. Perhaps he took his cue from Abraham, who was an old man when God called him to be the father of a host of nations (Genesis 17, 3-9). He could have easily said, "I'm too old for this. I'm too tired to be raising a host of kids." He not only had to deal with progeny beyond his wildest dreams, but with a name change: "No longer shall you be called Abram; your name shall be Abraham, for I am making you the father of a host of nations." I don't even want to change my email address because I've had it since Al Gore invented the Internet. But Abram changed his name after all those years and became Abraham to mark his new call in his life.

What allows people like Abraham and our own Father George Fey to be open to change regardless of age or circumstances in one's life? It has something to do with this understanding of covenant. Like Abraham, Father George trusted God's promises to him would be fulfilled. He made a covenant with God and God with him when he was baptized, incorporated as a Missionary of the Precious Blood, and ordained a priest. When we enter

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