



THE NEW WINE PRESS

Motivated by the Spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

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SPIRITUALITIES IN THE CLASSROOM

Daniel Torson, C.P.P.S.

It has been gratifying and invigorating to serve Lewis University in Romeoville, IL as both Assistant Professor of Theology and Chaplain for the past four years. Lewis is a thriving and financially stable university of 5,800 students reflecting a growth rate of about 2% per year. It is diverse, with a minority population of 30% and a Catholic population of 60%. The Theology Department is composed of eight full time theologians (including myself) and maintains a student limit of 25 students per class, which is rare in our current era. Two Theology courses are required of all students with an additional Ethics course which may be taken through either the Philosophy or Theology Departments. The Lasallian Mission of the Christian Brothers is highly promoted and implemented in all aspects of university life. Thus, the environment for teaching is excellent.

It is exciting for me to be a part of St. John Baptist de la Salle's mission of providing quality education in a Christian environment, while offering my own addition of Precious Blood spirituality. St. John and St. Gaspar intimately connect in their concern for the poor, the needy, and the marginalized. As it has become impossible to offer a free education as did De la Salle, Lewis University offers a moderately priced private education, a generous commitment to institutional scholarships, and an extensive commitment to community service.



My own journey into college ministry has been largely influenced by three factors: my parents who are models of generosity and compassion, my embrace of Precious Blood spirituality focusing upon reconciliation and compassion, and my Doctor of Ministry studies in which I researched Second Isaiah. These three factors have served to direct and focus my own love of scholarship and teaching.

The book of Second Isaiah was written to the Jewish exiles in Babylon—at a time when God seemed completely absent—in order to restore hope to a conquered people. The first words proclaimed from the prophet's mouth are the words of God the Almighty: "Comfort, give comfort to my people.... Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.... Her guilt is expiated" (Is 40:1-2). The prophet continues in declaration, "Here is your

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LEADERSHIP NOTES: *Salzburg & St. Louis*

James Urbanic, C.P.P.S.

This Summer I went to two meetings as a representative of the Kansas City Province. The first one was in July in Salzburg, Austria and was centered on Mission. Lac Pham was there by virtue of his leadership role in Vietnam, and Garry Richmeier and Dien Truong were our province delegates. The other meeting was the National Assembly of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) in August in St. Louis. Garry has already reported on the Salzburg meeting in the previous edition of *The New Wine Press*. Let me pick out two themes of both these meetings, especially where they overlap.

The theme of the St. Louis assembly was “Called to Proclaim the Gospel of Christ.” Apostolic Nuncio Bishop Pietro Sambì said to us, “I am deeply convinced that the values and the witness of religious life are extremely important for the renewal of the Church.” This is the same thing that religious have been saying for years. It was encouraging to hear our Nuncio say the same thing.

The theme of renewal was echoed by Fr. Steve Bevans, S.V.D., a professor of Mission at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He spoke at our international C.P.P.S. meeting in Salzburg. His topic was mission and he linked Church renewal and the growth of the Kingdom of God to both our C.P.P.S. charisms and our spirituality. Renewal of the Church by religious communities is seen in mission. Mission is the path to renewal. Steve’s six elements of mission featured prominently in his talks: witness and proclamation; liturgy, prayer and contemplation; justice, peace and the integrity of creation; interreligious and secular dialogue; enculturation; and reconciliation.

Our province leadership hopes to make the theme of mission a central one at our next assembly. Our congregation also wishes to develop a common theology of mission. Bishop Sambì spoke of renewal and Fr. Bevans spoke of mission as the way to renewal.

Fr. Tom Picton, C.S.S.R., in a talk as outgoing president of CMSM, said at the St. Louis conference that we religious are moving to the margins—of both society and Church. We should not be disturbed over that movement. We have always worked on the margins of society, and perhaps God is now calling us to minister on the margins of Church as well. His words have echoed with me for months as I think about our province’s relationships with the dioceses in which we serve, our

“We religious are moving to the margins—of both society and Church. We should not be disturbed over that movement. We have always worked on the margins of society, and perhaps God is now calling us to minister on the margins of Church as well.”



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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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God” who comes to you “like a shepherd [who] feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care” (Is 40:9c, 11). The prophet offers no lectures, no incriminations, no further judgments, and no further humiliation, but rather momentous and sumptuous visions of what is possible with the loving embrace of God. “Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed; I am your God” (Is 41:10).

Thus, God’s first response is compassion, a compassion in which hope is restored and a new vision of life becomes possible even within the dire straits of exile.

Lewis college students are like the college students at any other institution, in that some will skip class, forget to complete assignments, and think that they can “fake” their way through an exam without studying! Thus, it becomes very difficult for my first response to be one of compassion. But over the course of years I have learned that they are frequently responding to something else in their lives for which they do not possess the necessary skills to process and then appropriately respond. I offer three factors that greatly impact college students today.

First and foremost, is the enormous financial pressure that students currently face. Here is where I feel a huge generation gap. My college experience in the 1970s was never considered cheap, but today it is at least five times more expensive. I was able to work hard all summer and save enough for spending money for the entire year. Those days are long gone. Nearly all of our students either work extensively during the year or are on an athletic scholarship. Many commute across Chicagoland because they cannot afford to live on campus.

Secondly, as we are all aware, many come from unstable family and home environments. This has an even greater effect upon the teaching of Theology as unstable families frequently produce children who lack a religious background. Thus, when I walk into a classroom to teach Theology, I know my students will represent the entire spectrum of beliefs and understandings of God. The

positive development over the past few years is that there is a significant increase in the desire

to become spiritual among college students. The problem is that they neither possess the language or the experience of religion in order to pursue the spiritual life.

Lastly, many students do not possess the study and writing skills to reach the fullness of

their potential in college. This does

not imply that they are not bright. It

simply means that they are lacking in critical

skills which also must be taught in order for the students to achieve success. Yes, there are days when I feel like an English teacher as I correct and explain basic grammar. As one might

“My goal is to model compassion and respect as I teach aspects of spirituality, Christian tradition, and the moral life regardless of the particular topic or class. I seek to instill an openness to new thought, a depth of questioning in one’s life, and cultivate attempts at articulation and integration rather than prepackaged answers and complete agreement with my own thought.”



Fr. Daniel Torson with students at Lewis University

expect, the world of constant “text messaging” among students with its own abbreviated lingo contributes to an even lower quality of writing.

One might conclude that with all of this talk of “compassion” I must be a “pushover” professor in which everyone receives an “A.” Well, that is not the case. I expect excellent attendance and

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A MODEL OF COMPASSION

Bill Hubmann, C.P.P.S.

In grade school in the late 1950s and early 1960s the sisters often highlighted the life of a saint or some Christian hero. They were held up as models for us to imitate. We imitate the saints in order to become more and more like Christ in our own lives. One of stories the sisters told us had to do with Father Damien, the Belgian priest-missionary, who took his brother's place and left his home, his country and his kinsfolk to minister to the native people of the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii).



Fr. Bill Hubmann in Rome

All Hawaiians with Hansen's disease—leprosy—had been placed under a government-sanctioned medical quarantine, exiled to a sliver of land on the island of Molokai. Officials blamed the disease on the sexual promiscuity of the native people and not the immigrants who brought the disease to the islands and inflicted it upon the natives who had no immunity. Families were ruthlessly

torn asunder as children were taken from parents, parents from children, the ancient ones removed from their homes and families. The natives called leprosy "the separating sickness."

Damien responded to a call from the lepers and his bishop to take his turn as priest for the island of Molokai. The people were denied many creature comforts but mostly care for their wounds, the loss of human dignity, even being denied the sacraments for long periods of time and compassionate care for them in their

FIND YOUR OWN MOLOKAI

The church has a new saint. On Oct. 11, Pope Benedict XVI canonized Damien of Molokai. The Belgian-born Joseph de Veuster (he took the religious name Damien after joining the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary) was missioned to the Hawaiian Islands in 1864 and a few years later began his work among people suffering from Hansen's disease (then called leprosy), who were banished to the island of Molokai to limit contagion. The priest spent the rest of his life ministering to the sick until he too contracted the disease. He died in 1889 at the age of 49.

It is a stirring story. But what can the almost impossibly heroic life of St. Damien of Molokai say to everyday believers? Like that of many saints, Damien's life may seem undeniably noble, but difficult to emulate in our own workaday lives. Still, powerful resonances can be heard if we listen carefully. What parent is not

dying. Few of the priests who ministered to them bothered to get to know their names.

Damien begged to stay with the lepers and be their priest, to preach words that would heal and help. To lift them up. To remind them of their dignity as the children of God. God would see in their wounds the wounds of Christ and love them all the more. In time Damien's compassionate care and fearless ministry caused him to become a victim of the disease. He died in 1889 and was proclaimed around the world as a saint, a true Christian martyr of compassion. It took the Church 120 years to recognize and celebrate what the people of Hawaii saw so many years ago. He remained their hero.

In the early 1980s when many of us began to minister to young men and women afflicted with HIV/AIDS we saw mirrored in the treatment of these patients the same shameful treatment that was given lepers. We found in Father Damien a model of compassion who challenged us to go beyond our fears in order to come in touch with Christ present in the lives of those afflicted, abandoned, abused and exiled.

Father Damien has been my hero and my friend and my model of the priest-missionary. He has challenged me to be a better priest and healer of many wounds. It was a special joy and privilege for me to be in attendance at his recent canonization.

called upon to minister to a child who falls ill, even at the risk of contracting the same illness? Who is not called to stand with the outcast, with those whom polite society shuns either literally or metaphorically? Who is not called to do works of charity and love that remain hidden from the rest of the world? Damien's Molokai is not so far away as many might think.

When the faithful used to visit Mother Teresa and ask to work alongside her, she would often say, "Find your own Calcutta"—that is, care for the poor and forgotten where you are. Perhaps the story of St. Damien says to us, "Find your own Molokai."

America, October 26, 2009

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smaller numbers, and our having to make choices about what we do and where we minister. It seems like we are more intentional about our ministries now rather than simply taking what is given to us. A number of our younger men are moving away from parishes. Perhaps we are called to the margins of Church.

We certainly want to serve the Church, but perhaps our more traditional ministries, parish and education, are giving way to more non-traditional forms, like the Reconciliation Center in Chicago and working with minorities. Being on the margins may need to fit into a theology of mission, not only for religious in general but our own Kansas City province as well. Our recent province discussions on a future vision and parish life are helping us refine our mission.

Fr. Jim Urbanic serves on the Leadership Team in the role of Provincial Director and as pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Warrensburg, MO.

Church on Molokai built by Fr. Damian



Classroom, continued from page 3...

I get it. I am relentless in the pursuit of proper writing skills and I always see improvement by the end of the semester. I encourage and demand excellence, and they produce it. Students respond to clear expectations, organized classes and structure, and me getting a bit “crazy” on almost a daily basis. I get that from my father and brothers. We can be serious one second and making “wise cracks” and jokes the next second. It seems to work with students.

Thus, my goal is to model compassion and respect as I teach aspects of spirituality, Christian tradition, and the moral life regardless of the particular topic or class. I seek to instill an openness to new thought, a depth of questioning in one’s life, and cultivate attempts at articulation and integration rather than prepackaged answers and complete agreement with my own thought.

“I seek to offer a foundation of Christian thought within an environment that is supportive and respectful of my students as persons with individual needs regardless of where they are on their personal journeys of faith.”

The result is that I can be the encouragement that college students seek and need. The result is that students feel “safe” to discuss their difficulties and struggles. I get their honesty in reflection papers and extended conversations outside of class. As I write this I am currently walking with a baseball player of large stature who is attempting to deal with the death of his father last spring from cancer. I am working with a student who became intoxicated and belligerent and is facing expulsion from the residence hall. I have “gone to bat” for him because I know the goodness within him. He is repentant and truly wants to take responsibility by redirecting his life. We’ll see what happens. Another result is that I have been able to establish relationships with the student athletes and the ROTC corp. These two groups are often marginalized into their own worlds lacking the respect and support for their long hours of training.

It is a struggle for the college students of today to grow into maturity. I seek to offer a foundation of Christian thought within an environment that is supportive and respectful of my students as persons with individual needs regardless of where they are on their personal journeys of faith. My spirituality of compassion inspired by the example of St. Gaspar, St. John Baptist de la Salle, and Jesus Christ himself is the gift that I offer in college teaching and ministry.

Fr. Daniel Torson is Assistant Professor of Theology and Chaplain at Lewis University in Romeoville, IL.

ENTERING THE GARDEN

Mark Yates

This past summer I spent two months in Vietnam living with our candidates while helping them with their English. I knew it was going to be different, but I did not know how different. I had received some information from Br. Matthew Schaefer of the Cincinnati Province, who was there during the summer of 2008. My biggest apprehensions were what to expect in a communist country, and how I would be affected by the food. I went knowing neither the language nor the customs, but with an open mind and an open heart.

The flight arrived on-time around 11:00 P.M. and I got through customs easily. One of my apprehensions about going to a communist country was that there would be a large military/police presence, but such was not the case. As I exited the airport I saw a mass of people. As I wondered how I would find either Frs. Lac or Dien, I heard someone shout my name. I turned around and was welcomed with broad smiles by Frs. Lac and Dien, Dominic Bui, Peter Tam, Joseph Ky, and Joseph Diep. We took a taxi back to the house where the candidates live and where I would be staying. Much to my surprise, on the table in my room on the third floor were a jar of peanut butter and a loaf of bread—how did they know I love peanut butter? A little taste of home, which was much appreciated.

The next day, we started class around 8:00 A.M. We reintroduced ourselves and I tried to learn the correct pronunciation of each one's name. I told them a little bit about myself, that I had been a candidate, dropped out of formation for twenty years and now was a candidate again—like them. I told them that I was not a professional teacher, but we would do the best we could, building on what they already knew, practicing pronunciation and trying to make it fun in the process. They shared about their families and backgrounds and then went over the house schedule with me.

They usually rise at 4:30 A.M. and go to Mass at the nearby parish at 5:00 A.M., followed by Morning Prayer and breakfast. Our English classes would run from 8:00-11:00 A.M., then lunch at noon followed by a siesta—or “sacred time,” as John Vianney Loi

liked to refer to it. In the afternoon or evening, I could be available if one or more wanted further conversation. Supper was at 6:00 P.M., followed by Night Prayer at 8:00 P.M.; the usual bedtime was between 10:00 and 11:00 P.M.

Fr. Roger Schroeder, S.V.D., a professor at Catholic Theological Union (CTU), describes going to another culture as entering someone else's garden (*The Healing Circle: Essays in Cross-Cultural Mission*, ed. by Stephen Bevans, S.V.D.; Eleanor Doidge, L.O.B.; and Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S., CCGM Publications: Chicago, IL, 2000, 147-161). On entering someone else's garden, the stranger does not necessarily know what is a valued plant and what is a weed in that garden, only the distinctions made in one's own cultural garden. Schroeder cites Max Warren's use of the image of “taking off one's shoes” as when before the burning bush Moses removed his sandals. As a stranger I relied on our candidates to also teach me about their history, culture, and religious practices.

One of the first lessons they taught me was that there were indoor shoes and outdoor shoes.

“Much to my surprise, on the table in my room on the third floor, were a jar of peanut butter and a loaf of bread—how did they know I love peanut butter? A little taste of home, which was much appreciated.”



Mark Yates teaching English in Vietnam

In the house I wore flip-flops, but when we went outside I would change into either sandals or shoes. When we visited other people's homes, we would take our shoes off and leave them near the

entrance. Often I was told I could leave mine on, but I took them off anyway. Upon leaving, I could always spot my shoes, because they were the largest.

Over the 19th-20th of July, Dominic Bui, C.P.P.S., Joseph Diep and Joseph Ky (two of the Initial Formation candidates) and I went with several volunteer doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other



The trip to Bai Vang in the Mekong Delta

volunteers to Bai Vang to help the poor with some medical care. There were also two women who gave haircuts. They do this a few times a year when there is a big enough group of volunteers to go.

We left Ho Chi Minh City around 8:30 P.M. in a van and a small bus from two different parishes. After we met up, we caravanned from there to a parish, arriving around 3:00 A.M. After a short rest, we went to the nearby dock around 5:30 A.M. to catch the ferry to the island in the Mekong Delta where Bai Vang is located. We arrived at the parish around 7:00 A.M. and began setting up the pharmacy with the medications we brought along, and also an exam area. After breakfast, they began seeing patients. There were several nurses or nurse aids who would take people's vital signs before they began their wait to see one of the five doctors. After the doctor wrote a prescription, volunteers would write each item on a packet with instructions. A couple of us would then take the prescriptions and packets to the pharmacy area to be filled and given to the patient.

During the morning I met several people there who were from the area and who had studied English. They seemed grateful for the opportunity to try out their English on me. They told me that while they learn grammar and writing, they have very little

opportunity for conversational English, so they were taking advantage of my presence.

After finishing up with the first round of several hundred patients, a big lunch of fish soup, crab, vegetables, rice, a colorful gelatin dessert and apples was provided. After lunch they saw more patients until 3:00 P.M. We packed up and headed back to the ferry. Once we got back to the parish and loaded up, we headed back to Ho Chi Minh City where we arrived about 11:00 P.M.

I realized how much the people appreciated the group coming to provide some medical assistance they would not otherwise get. Certainly this is a response to the cry of the blood. The organizer of the group is also an Inquirer and a medical doctor.

One day Joseph Truc, a Pledged candidate, and I went to the War Remnants Museum in downtown Ho Chi Minh City. There are some outdoor exhibits of U.S. military equipment and inside there are numerous photographic displays, by photo-journalists who covered the war, showing wartime atrocities, particularly those committed by the U.S. and South Vietnam. There is also a large display of photographs of people with birth deformities that occur

“I realized how much the people appreciated the group coming to provide some medical assistance they would not otherwise get. Certainly this is a response to the cry of the blood.”

even today where napalm, Agent Orange and Dioxin were used during the war. I realized how the effects of war do not end when the guns are silent, especially in this day and age. The atrocities of war are

horrendous and it was one of the few times in my life I felt embarrassed being an American.

Dominic, Peter Tam, John Vianney Loi and I went to the Highlands for two days in August. In Phu Nhon we visited a group of sisters and a nearby Redemptorist house. We also visited a family, the father of which took us to a mission in the countryside where many fatherless

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NEWS FROM THE VIETNAM MISSION

Lac Pham, C.P.P.S.

Summer months have come and gone and so have some people. From mid-June to mid-August our formation house was graced with Mark Yates' presence. Thinking that our living style is too simple to those coming from the U.S., we tried to fix up a private room with air-conditioning for Mark. On the night Mark arrived some of us hurried to the supermarket—still a modern novelty to many of us—to fetch a loaf of sandwich bread and a jar of peanut-butter and some bananas. Much to our surprise, Mark did not ask for much; he didn't even turn on the air-conditioner and ate almost anything that we normally eat here. During these two summer months Mark helped our students with learning English.



Joseph Truc teaching religious education class

Shortly after Mark left we welcomed another American into our house. Mr. Dan Kelley, a Vietnam Vet, in his retirement decided to return to Vietnam to do some volunteer work. Last year he taught an English class every Saturday morning to our students. Upon his return this year we invited him to come and live with us and tutor our students in English.



Day of Recollection

Following Mark's arrival last June, Dien left for the United States, but now has returned to busy himself with formation work in the community and pastoral work at a large parish where he resides.

Since his definitive incorporation, Dominic Nhan has chosen to pursue ordained ministry. He is currently taking courses at the Dominican Center as well as at the deSalles Brothers Center for Religious Studies. He is also working in vocation ministry with me while living at the formation house with the pledged candidates.

The number of pledged candidates remains the same. John Vianney Loi began his first year of theology, and Peter Tam began his second year of philosophy; both are studying at the Dominican Center for philosophy and theology studies. Joseph Truc, having completed his philosophy and theology studies two years ago, and one year of pastoral internship at a rural parish, is now honing up his English skills for a TOEFL test, anticipating that he will be able to pursue further studies in the U.S. in the near future. He is also teaching religious education to high school students at a local parish.

In the other house, I am living with with six in-resident C.P.P.S. inquirers. Joseph Ky is in his fourth year of a five-year bachelors program in oil painting. Since September, he went on a two-month practicum in a northern province of Vietnam, living in a mountain village with the montagnards. Joseph Diep began his second year learning Fine Arts Education, and is getting ready to depart for his two month practicum course. Joseph Dung finally made it to college this year and is busy learning to be a college student. Martin An is in his second



Paul Liem & Martin Kiet, the newest candiitates

year of college. He works full time as a purchase and sales account manager for an internet security hardware company during the day and goes to school in the evenings. This year the household welcomed two new young men, Martin Kiet and Paul Liem, who have just passed their college



Day of Recollection

entrance exams during the summer and now are attending a technical college.

Faithful to our schedules, this morning being the first Sunday of the month and also the Feast of All Saints, the entire community gathered for our monthly day of recollection. We read and shared insights coming from the tenth chapter



Learning to take blood pressure

of Father Robert Shreiter's book, *In Water and in Blood*. The C.P.P.S. non-resident inquirers and A.S.C. inquirers usually join us for days of recollection and retreat, and on days of community celebrations. Occasionally some of us accompany a group of physicians going out to rural communities helping the locals with basic medical care and hunger relief.

Fr. Lac Pham is the Director of the Vietnam Mission.

St. Gaspar Feast Day 2009



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children live. We passed out candy and snacks to everyone and there was some singing. Our guide also showed us several community wells that provide fresh water close to people's homes so they do not have to carry it so far. We also visited several other locations and then Peter Tam's family before returning.

I think the lesson I learned is the value of presence. How much it must have meant to the members of the J'Rai, an ethnic minority whom we met, that we took the time to visit with them. Though we could not alleviate their daily struggles, we could show them by our presence that we were in solidarity with them—our remembering them after we left; our telling others about their situation; and praying for them.

I had many new experiences, all of them good. I was amazed at the number of fruits and vegetables that I had never seen, heard of, or knew the English name for. I was continually amazed at the sea of motorbikes.

I am grateful for the cross-cultural education from CTU that helped prepare me. "We are enriched and challenged by God's revelation during the process of engaging in a mutual cross-cultural relationship with people" (Schroeder, 159). As Moses removed his sandals because he was on sacred ground, entering a totally different culture is a humbling experience. It is also an experience that has broadened my vision by bringing to the center of my vision what had previously been only on the periphery.

I would like to thank our community in Vietnam for their warm hospitality and for making me feel at home. May God's abundant blessings be upon them. I feel blessed in having had the opportunity to go to Vietnam, especially to meet our community there. I think I probably learned more than I taught. I realize we are connected by deep bonds that surpass our cultural, physical or racial bonds: our bond of Baptism, our bond of faith, our bond in the Blood of Christ, our bond of charity.

Mark Yates is a Pledged Candidate for the Kansas City Province, studying theology and ministry at CTU in Chicago.



The Gift of Diversity

Nathan Hess

I recall an experience that I had several years ago on a weekend retreat. There was a blind man who was also participating in the retreat. After everyone arrived at the retreat center, we gathered for introductions. When it was the blind man's turn to introduce himself, he shared his name and where he was from, followed by some of his favorite activities. I was stunned as he shared that he loved playing the violin, going to movies, and snow skiing. These are all things that I would not have expected a blind person to do or enjoy.

But why was I so surprised? After all, he is a person just like me, and I too enjoy playing instruments, going to movies, and skiing. Perhaps from my lack of exposure to blind people, I made inaccurate assumptions about this man's abilities and disability. By the end of the weekend, I had come to realize that the blind man was able to notice details, or in effect "see," much more than I could have imagined him capable of, and in some ways he had better vision than me. He had no sight, yet was extremely insightful. His gifts far surpassed his limitations. I, on the other hand, was blinded by

our differences, until I was able to look beyond them to see this man in a more complete way. There was so much more to him than his sense of sight.

How tempting it is to make broad assumptions about a person based on one aspect of his or her life, and in doing so, miss out on the gifts that he or she has to offer. To this day, I struggle with letting my assumptions keep me from discovering the actual person before me. Whether it is their clothes, possessions, political affiliation, religion, ethnicity, weight, accent, sexuality—the list goes on—my handicap is my quickness to judge others based on an incomplete understanding of that person. Hopefully, in time, I will become more aware of my shallow assumptions, and able to see beyond to the more complete person. May I also become more patient with those who misunderstand me, or



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Imagine That

David Matz, C.P.P.S.

Imagine a world where undocumented persons are welcomed as brothers and sisters, where all people are persons first and not labeled such as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgendered, where persons find a safe place at our tables at home and at the Eucharist in order to just “be” or just tell their stories of God. This is the world that Jesus imagined as the Reign of God, this is the world of Sacred Scripture. This is not only the world we imagine as Missionaries of the Precious Blood, but it is also the world we struggle to embody and to create with Christ in our world today.

I want to cite Luke Timothy Johnson's May 22, 2009 *Commonweal* article, “How Is the Bible True?” His thesis is that Biblical truth is found “...when we begin to imagine the world Scripture itself imagines...; when we ask what is the shape of that world and its rules and how we might embody it...; when we are willing to ask not only whether Scripture imagines a true world, but whether we ourselves read truly, and as readers act in the truth.... To read the Bible truly we must be in the process of being transformed by the world

that Scripture imagines; to speak truly about Jesus, one must be in the process of being transformed by his image.”

The world that I find myself in today is my ministry with Spanish-speaking immigrants in San Rafael, CA. Here we have accompanied many persons—brothers and sisters in our Catholic faith—into city jails, immigration prisons, deportation, and the arduous journey back to be reunited with their families in the United States.

Here racial profiling proliferates with police “check points,” and unjust practices of towing cars in Latino neighborhoods—sanctioned by city authorities as a “nuisance,” while the same law is ignored in wealthier neighborhoods. And yet, here a group of county organizers dares to imagine a world where human rights are equitably practiced for all, where a young man facing deportation is empowered to stand up and give voice to his story, and a community of citizens and undocumented persons can come together—1000 strong—with political and religious leaders, proclaim the values of love and justice, and be heard.

The world I find myself in today is where our own bishops are creating yet another document, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, decrying the rise of same-sex marriage as “one of the most troubling developments in contemporary culture,” citing only previous Church documents to support their claim. In the *Huffington Post*, Sept. 3, 2009, it was pointed out that after 5 years of same-sex marriage Massachusetts remains the state with the lowest divorce rate (according to the most recent data from the National Center For Vital Statistics).

Quite honestly, it’s difficult if not almost impossible to create “safe space” around our Eucharistic tables with baptized brothers and sisters when our religious world still remains buried in heterosexist attitudes, rather than the dignity of the human person. A dignity that arises out of the imaginative world of Scripture and a dignity that challenges our Precious Blood Ministry of Justice for persons who are LGBT to

not only imagine but to create, to “do” our ministry.

The world I find myself in today is creating such a space at Sonnino House in Berkeley, CA. With the arrival of Frs. Joe Nassal and Matt Link, Fr. Jim Sloan and myself are imagining with them and creating a place where all are welcomed around our dinner table, our Eucharistic table and the table of our lives. In a world where we exhaust a lot of time excluding others, we imagine Sonnino House to be a place of inclusion, a place where those who don’t find a home in society or in their own religious communities, can be brothers and sisters in Christ first, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, legal status, or race.



“Here a group of county organizers dares to imagine a world where human rights are equitably practiced for all, where a young man facing deportation is empowered to stand up and give voice to his story, and a community of citizens and undocumented persons can come together with political and religious leaders, proclaim the values of love and justice, and be heard.”

The Gospel from Mark 10: 35-45, the 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time, clearly confronts the political or religious “glory seats” in this world and calls us all to imagine a world where “service” and “handing over” one’s life for others are the seats of glory we are to occupy. In our world where people are excluded because of legal status or for a fundamental condition of their being, we embody the imagination of the world of Scripture and bring the Reign of God, the Reign of justice into being by handing over our lives and serving one another with Christ’s love.

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

Diversity, continued from page 10...

make assumptions based on an incomplete understanding of my differences (or gifts).

Thank you to all who participated in “Assuring a Place at the Table,” the workshops held this summer in Dayton, Ohio and Leavenworth, Kansas sponsored by the Precious Blood Ministry of Justice for persons who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered. Acknowledging that all blood is precious, and that every person has dignity, we will come to a greater understanding of one another and a greater appreciation for our various gifts.

Finally, I want to share an email letter that I recently sent to Cardinal Francis George, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, Chair of the Committee on Marriage and Family Life of the USCCB, regarding a draft pastoral letter that is going to be

considered at this November's USCCB gathering in Baltimore. For me, as a gay catholic, it feels like the church is constantly telling us that we can't drink from the same drinking fountain, or eat at the same lunch counter, or even attend the same school (seminary). Most of my gay/lesbian friends have recognized that they are not wanted and have left the church. My conscience does not allow me to leave, but instead, to stay and "fight"—using the weapons of truth and love. Oftentimes, it seems like an uphill battle, but one that needs to be waged, nonetheless. I feel so blessed to have the support of the Precious Blood family.

Nathan Hess is a Precious Blood Companion from Cincinnati, OH.

Dear Cardinal George and Archbishop Kurtz,

My name is Nathan Hess. I am 31 years old, educated, and have a good job. I'm active and involved in my church, and deeply value my family. It seems to me that my very ordinary life is representative of the average catholic. Therefore, I write in hope to provide you with insight into the thoughts that are likely shared by “ordinary” Catholics throughout America.

My moral compass is not oriented solely on current church teaching, however, it is grounded on a solid foundation based on the values developed through my Catholic upbringing. When faced with a moral dilemma, I consider more than current church teaching. I must also consider lived experience, personal prayer, and developments in understanding of science and society—as God's truth is revealed in many ways. God cannot be limited to revealing truth through church teaching alone, and therefore I remain open to additional sources of inspiration. Again, I share this because I believe this is the common approach to moral decision making by the majority of American Catholics.

This week, I read the draft of the pastoral letter, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, which is to be considered at the November gathering of the U.S. bishops. While this letter may be indicative of where our current church leadership stands on issues of marriage, divorce, and contraception, I can tell you without a doubt that this letter is out of touch with the lived experience of most Catholic laity, and fails to consider developments in science and society. As drafted, this letter will please a vocal minority of socially conservative Catholics, and highlights the misunderstanding and lack of collaboration with

the majority of the faithful. If this letter is adopted by the conference of bishops, it will have little or no effect on how the average Catholic views these issues.

With all of the challenges in modern society, it is appropriate for the Church to be a leader in discussing marriage and its proper role in society. A serious dialogue that shows our church leadership is interested in listening to its people, and to the signs of the times, will have a much greater impact on those of us whom you were chosen to serve. The educated laity wishes to be included in such discussions. Is it possible that God may wish to reveal truths to the clergy through the laity? After all, the laity are the ones with actual lived experience of marriage and sexual relationship.

The current draft is incomplete. More questions need to be explored. For example, if marriage is going to be denied to same-sex couples, than how is the church going to recognize these relationships and include these members of our communities? Please let us, the faithful educated, share in the discussion about love, life, and marriage before issuing a pastoral letter.

Sincerely,
Nathan Hess

The Meaning of Matthew

Marie Trout

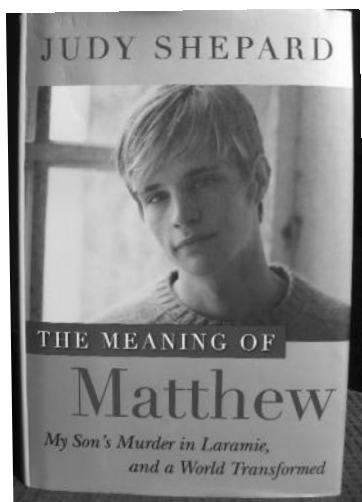
I would like to recommend a book I read recently, *The Meaning of Matthew* by Judy Shepherd. You may recall that she is the mother of Matthew Shepherd, a young gay man who died as the result of a brutal hate crime in Laramie, WY in 1998.

With so many people that we encounter in the news, we often learn just snippets about them and their family. We form opinions based on the little bit the news chooses to share with us. After reading this touching story, I have a different and fuller knowledge and appreciation of the Matthew Shepard I read about years ago. The book puts a human face on Matthew and allows us to learn about him as a child and a young man, and what events in his life made him who he was.

But beyond learning about Matthew, I more importantly learned about Matthew's family, how he impacted their lives, and how his death changed them forever. Matthew's mother does not sugar coat his life. She courageously and honestly shares details about who her son was. She bravely shares her feelings and the loss she deals with daily. But she also shares how this event caused her to step out of her comfort zone and become a public figure who speaks out openly for legislation on hate crimes and an international activist for gay rights—things she never imagined herself doing.

If you have a few hours and want to read a very fine and moving book about family and relationships and coping with what life presents you, I strongly recommend *The Meaning of Matthew*.

Marie Trout is Province Director of Companions.



The Meaning Of Matthew: My Son's Murder in Laramie, and a World Transformed

By Judy Shepherd

Hardcover, 288 pages
Penguin Books

This book follows the Shepard family in the days following the crime, when Judy and her husband traveled to see their incapacitated son, kept alive by life support machines; how they learned of the incredible response from strangers all across America who held candlelight vigils and memorial services for their child; and finally, how they struggled to navigate the legal system as Matthew's murderers were on trial. Heart-wrenchingly honest, Judy Shepherd confides with readers about how she handled the crippling loss of her child, why she became a gay rights activist, and the challenges and rewards of raising a gay child in America today.

The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act was signed into law by President Barack Obama on October 28, 2009. It expanded the 1969 United States federal hate-crime law to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

In addition to Matthew Shepard, the act is also named for James Byrd, Jr., an African-American man who was tied to a truck by two known white supremacists, dragged from it, and decapitated in Jasper, Texas in 1998. There were no hate crimes laws in Texas or Wyoming at the time of these crimes.

Judy Shepherd is cofounder of the Matthew Shepard Foundation, which is dedicated to social justice, diversity awareness and education, and equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. Shepard speaks across the country on behalf of the foundation. This is part of the statement she made in response to the bill's passage:

"We are incredibly grateful to Congress and the president for taking this step forward on behalf of hate crime victims and their families, especially given the continuing attacks on people simply for living their lives openly and honestly. Too many people face the threat of losing their jobs or their homes due to their sexual orientation. Too many same-sex couples lack legal protections for their property, their health care decisions, and their children. Too many devoted and dedicated servicemembers are being turned away by our armed forces.

I hope, as you reflect on the success of the hate crime prevention bill, that you also take the extra step of contacting your state and federal elected officials in support of full equality for all citizens, regardless of difference.

Be open about who you are and who you love. Dispel stereotypes and assumptions. Tell your stories."

Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.

MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS

Frank J. Niemas

“What is the Precious Blood Convocation?” “Why is it being held?” “Why am I being asked to help in the planning, and how can I contribute?” These were the questions going through my mind when I was asked to join the Convocation Planning Committee in early 2007.

I have now been involved in the planning for the Convocation for over two years and I am learning the answers to my questions. Some of the answers were relatively straight-forward, while others have caused me to reflect, learn and grow (a slow, continuous process for me, often accompanied by a little bit of uncertainty and anxiety!).

First, came answers to the easier questions.

The official title of this event is “The Precious Blood Convocation.” It is, in simpler terms, a congress of Precious Blood congregations in North America. This is the fourth congress in recent years, organized by the Precious Blood Leadership Conference and representing seven Precious Blood congregations which encompass priests, sisters, brothers, amici and lay associates. By now, all members of the various congregations have seen the publicity for the Convocation and know the basic information. It will be held July 26–29, 2010 at St. Louis University in St. Louis, MO. The theme is “WHO WILL SPEAK THE WORD TO ROUSE THEM? I CAN, I MUST, I WILL. WILL YOU?”

At this point, I can also answer why it is being held. The words are easy now but they came only after months of meeting, reflection, prayer and discernment by the planning committee. The purpose of the Convocation is to deepen our understanding of Precious Blood theology, to witness to the Gospel, and to embrace the anguish of the church and the world with redeeming love. These words mean different things to each of us depending on our personal story and our relationship to the different Precious Blood congregations.

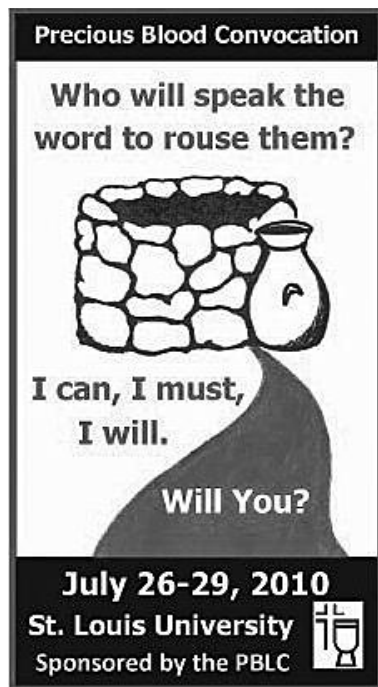
The most difficult and challenging question for me was the last one, “Why am I being asked to help in the planning, and how can

I contribute?” My journey with the planning committee is helping me to answer this question. I want to share my answer because this question may also be in the minds of the lay people who are a part of the Precious Blood congregations and have questions and concerns regarding their participation in the Convocation. Hopefully, it will also lead to strong participation from our lay members.

As a Companion of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Cincinnati Province, my role on the planning committee is to be a representative of those lay people in the Precious Blood congregations who have been touched by Precious Blood spirituality and who have been drawn to more active participation within a Precious Blood congregation. My journey began in 1973 as a parishioner at St. Andrew’s Church in Orlando, FL, which had been entrusted to the care of the C.P.P.S. priests since its founding in 1957.

There was something special about St. Andrew and the priests and the people there. At first I was unaware of what that something special was. I knew nothing about “C.P.P.S.” or St. Gaspar or Precious Blood spirituality. I just felt a special spirit within the community, marked by welcoming and hospitality. There was a strong involvement of the laity in all the parish activities which was encouraged by our Precious Blood priests. Most striking was the diversity in our community—people of all backgrounds, races, ethnicities worshipping and working together. I just knew that the special spirit within our parish was calling me, changing my attitudes, challenging me, and changing my life in ways both big and small.

About 15 years ago, my wife and I became Precious Blood companions with the Cincinnati Province. Slowly, we came to understand that it was the spirit and work of St. Gaspar that had much to do with the strength and vitality of our parish. I came to understand more about the gift of Precious Blood spirituality. And circumstances



in my life as well as my exposure to Precious Blood spirituality came together to change my attitudes towards such things as the death penalty, to bring me more awareness of the need for social justice and an appreciation of the need for reconciliation, both within the church and in my life.

I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, when homosexuality was not discussed and was even covered up. In my own life, I have been blessed to know close family members and friends who are gay. I see the goodness in them, their hunger for God (which is present in all of us, regardless of sexual orientation). The issues within the church, the feeling of many gay people that they are not welcome in my Church, are no longer just abstractions to me. The anguish over this issue, the desire to be an agent of change, acceptance, and reconciliation are part of my journey now.

In July 2008, after more than 50 years, St. Andrew Parish lost the care of the C.P.P.S. priests who are no longer able to staff the parish. I feel deeply the loss of the priests, and it has been and still is a painful situation as our parish is struggling. Many of us feel the call to keep Precious Blood spirituality alive in our parish. In my own diocese, I see controversy, strife and discouragement, and I struggle to

try to make a difference. And yet, I feel (and I am probably right) that I am still just taking baby steps on my journey. And I wonder, what can I do, how can I possibly contribute?

With these feelings, I joined the Convocation Planning Committee with some apprehension. My fellow committee members were priests, brothers, sisters and lay people who, by background and education, were far more qualified than me. There were theologians, educators, social workers and liturgists on the com-

mittee. Even the word “theology” was intimidating to me. And while, maybe, my heart was in the right place, I really wondered what I could possibly contribute to the committee. I had none of the qualifications of the other members. I had no formal religious training (beyond my exposure to the Baltimore Catechism!) My degree is in engineering. I am semi-retired. My experience in



St. Louis, MO

serving others is as a son, husband, father, grandfather and friend as well as through various ministries in the church—would that be enough?

I found an answer in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12, especially verse 7, which states, “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” I see the reading as a call to all

members of the body of Christ to share their gifts, especially the unique gift of self, which each

of us is called to share. More importantly, I have found an answer in the

spirit of welcoming, openness, and acceptance which I have felt from all of my fellow committee members (and now, friends.) Sometimes I felt it by words, as when Sr. Marie smiles at me and says, “I’m so glad you’re

here,” but just as often I feel the

Precious Blood hospitality through all that the committee does, especially in

the ways disagreements and differences of opinion are solved in a spirit of cooperation.

So for me the question of how I can contribute has been answered. I cannot be a theologian, liturgist, etc., but that’s OK because God has provided those gifts in abundance on our

“I cannot be a theologian, liturgist, etc., but that’s OK because God has provided those gifts in abundance on our committee. All I can give is the gift of myself: my hopes, my concerns, my experiences on my own Precious Blood journey. However small my gifts are, I need to trust that the Spirit will allow me to contribute to the work of our committee and of the body written about in Corinthians.”

See St. Louis, continued on page 19...

PARTISAN OR PROPHETIC?

Thomas Welk, C.P.P.S.

Probably many years ago for most of us, we studied in civics class the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

We know that the framers of the documents for governing our country were reacting to oppressive state religions in Europe. They wanted to assure that people would be free to follow their religious convictions without government interference or state-sanctioned dominance by a religious majority.

All of this has come to be a sacred tenet: "The separation of Church and State." It is a simple and straightforward statement. It is easy to make a statement, however; the challenge comes in backing it up. Unfortunately, for many this statement means, "I want not only to be free to practice the religion of my choice; I want it to be the only religion in the public domain."

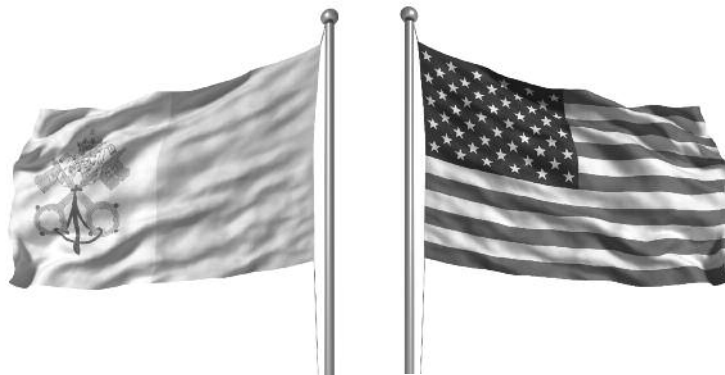
This is seen in the constant efforts expended in some quarters to impose their religious convictions on others. Having prayer (as long as it reflects the prayer of my religion) in public schools and the teaching of Creationism and its stepchild, Intelligent Design, are only a few illustrations of these efforts.

Even though we can be relatively clear about what it means to have a separation of Church and State, and that there be no state-sanctioned religion, it is much more challenging to determine what it means for a Church to operate within a State.

It is my firm conviction that we need to maintain this separation, but at the same time I am not willing to concede that the Church does not have a role in what happens politically within a country.

Above all, I believe that the Church and the State must cooperate in efforts to provide for the well-being of its members

"The Church throughout the world finds itself within various types of states. The Church must always engage in a responsible prophetic role, keeping the State honest in its duty to foster the well-being and the rights of its citizens."



and citizens, including access to adequate health-care. Maintaining the common good is a clear-cut responsibility for the State. This includes many rights outlined in the Constitution. When the State is remiss in guaranteeing and providing for these rights, the Church has a duty to call the State to task for not fostering the best interests of its citizens.

The role of calling out the State when it is remiss becomes impossible when the Church is too closely aligned with the State. This invariably leads to corruption. We need not look too far back in history to see that this is the case.

Operating "within a State," the Church must above all exercise its prophetic role. To be able to do so, the Church must definitely maintain its independence. This can be a thankless and difficult task. Those in power (including many times those in the religious arena) do not like to be criticized.

False prophets are preferred by the State. What is the difference between God's prophet and a false prophet? This question is answered in 1 Kgs 22:2-28: A false prophet tells you what you want to hear; while the true prophet tells you what you need to hear.

Unfortunately, too many of our religious leaders have become false prophets, frequently aligning themselves too closely with a political party, telling politicians what they

want to hear. Being a partisan skill is not the way for a Church to exercise a responsible role within a State.

Politicians love to wrap themselves in the flag, hold up the bible and call on the name of God. This gives them carte blanche to do whatever they want for their personal materialistic

gain and power, rather than looking out for the well-being of the citizenry.

Even Billy Graham acknowledged this in a comment made in *PARADE* magazine many years ago: “It was a mistake to identify the Kingdom of God with the American way of life.” For way too many in our American churches “God and the American way” go hand-in-hand.

In the opinion of some, the Church should not be in the business of criticizing the government or politicians, especially when that government or that politician is of the political party I prefer. This is reflected in the statements heard frequently in the 1970s, directed toward those protesting our involvement in the Vietnam War, “My country, right or wrong.”

This statement is attributed to Stephen Decatur, a naval officer in the War of 1812. He is reported to have said in a toast in 1816, “Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations, may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong.” Our attitude should be more that of Carl Schurz, who in an 1872 senate speech denounced President Grant’s attempt to annex Santo Domingo, “Our country right or wrong! When right, to be kept right; when wrong, to be put right.”

“For Gaspar, the Blood of Christ was shed to enable God’s people, especially the poor, to have freedom and life. Gaspar had to endure many hardships for speaking the truth to power. Precious Blood spirituality for Gaspar did not mean only engaging in pious practices.”

The only way the Church can carry out this role of challenging the State is when it is separated from the State. Being separated does not mean becoming passive. The Church throughout the world finds itself within various types of states. The Church must always engage in a responsible prophetic role, keeping the State honest in its duty to foster the well-being and the rights of its citizens.

As outlined by Pope John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963), these rights include the right to “food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest and finally the necessary social services.” Let us pray that both the Church and the State be on the same page in guaranteeing and fostering these basic human “right to life” rights.

In doing so we will follow in the footsteps of Gaspar who did not hesitate to criticize the civil (or religious) powers of his day when they violated these basic rights. For Gaspar, the Blood of Christ was shed to enable God’s people, especially the poor, to have freedom and life. Gaspar was willing to put his life on the line to continue the redemptive mission of Jesus. This frequently required him to engage in a prophetic role. In doing so, Gaspar had to endure many hardships for speaking the truth to power. Precious Blood spirituality for Gaspar did not mean only engaging in pious practices.

May St. Gaspar inspire us also to courageously carry out our prophetic role both as a religious community and as individuals, living as people of the Precious Blood, calling the State to task when it is not serving the needs of its citizens.

Fr. Tom Welk is the director of pastoral care and professional education at Harry Hynes Memorial Hospice in Wichita, KS.



AUTUMN (ASLEEP)

Joe Miller, C.P.P.S.

People often talk about their favorite season of the year. Here in the midwest, we have the privilege of enjoying four distinct seasons, and I think each one has its own beauty. I have just returned from attending the Precious Blood Vocation and Formation Conference (PBVFC) at Salem Heights in Dayton, OH. As I travelled back to Missouri by car, I was impressed by the beauty of nature, especially the colors of the trees this year. I am not sure if the trees are more colorful this year or if I have just taken time to notice them.

The leaves will of course fall from the trees and the trees will look dead. Reflecting on this idea brings me to one topic that Fr. Barry Fischer shared with us at the PBVFC. His first presentation was "Some Common Threads of Spirituality Shared by Precious Blood throughout the World." One of those threads is the Paschal Mystery. It is a process of letting go or dying so something new can come to life. Isn't that what the leaves do year after year?

In our vocation ministry, we try to help people to see if they are to die to a way of life and look toward a new life within community. We begin that by helping them move from "me" to "our," from "independence" to "interdependence." As a Precious Blood Community, we are called to continually let go and be open to new life.

Barry gave several challenges to the vocation and formation people after each thread. I would like to share those challenges to our community. He challenged us to look at how we let go daily

to rise to new life. How do we live the Paschal Mystery out and put it into practice within our community? This thread continues to be with us until our final "letting go."

The Eucharist is the central thread of our Precious Blood spirituality. Barry commented about the importance of ritual, living in the present, and taking the Eucharist out into the world in which we live. This is also true with adoration. Adoration needs to lead us to the Eucharist and to go out beyond ourselves and share the Good News. Ritual is important, but not more important than sharing the Eucharist. How are we living out the Eucharist every day of our lives?

Reconciliation brings Christ's healing presence to many relationships, and is another common thread. We are called to look at ourselves. Who are we and what is broken or wounded? How do we deal with our brokenness? Reconciliation begins with God who takes the initiative to help us be in right relationships. I, as a Precious Blood member, am called to imitate Christ and strive to initiate right relationships in my world. Barry asked a couple of questions: How do we deal with healing relationships in our Life? How do we deal with healing relationships in our community?

Still another thread is the cross, which is a sign of God's love. This is about redemptive suffering which calls us to take up our cross daily and follow Christ. We have St. Gaspar who calls us to preach the Gospel first to ourselves. Fr. Joe Nassal encourages us to be "Compassionate Pilgrims," walking in suffering and helping others with suffering. There is a benefit to redemptive suffering. How do we challenge each other to grow and live Precious Blood Spirituality? How do we help people to live with the knocks of life and face difficulties and grow from them?

A fifth common thread presented by Barry is community. I was struck with the rise of the phrase "a Trinitarian Community." I really like all that it says for me and calls me to do: Be a community who is in right relationship with each other. Coming from



a large family and belonging to community, I know it takes constant effort, and lots of it, to make that come even close to being true. Barry shared some of the things that were important to help accomplish a Trinitarian Community: Christ-centered, living the Gospel, inclusivity (all are important and have something to offer), respect, trust, and hospitality (within community and outside community). Having these characteristics is a way of building a community, “a Trinitarian Community.” Are we willing to listen to one another to help accomplish this?

Barry gave other ideas that may not be as universal as the five above, like Stewardship of Nature (Brazil), Village of Hope (Tanzania), and Immigrant (Madrid). It was refreshing to listen to Barry even though this may not be all new to many of you. I did like the personal touch Barry gave as he shared with us as vocation and formation people of Precious Blood community.

May God help us to grow to be the community that God calls us to be. If we are in the Autumn mode, may the Eucharist “Spring” us to new life.

Fr. Joe Miller is the Province Director of Vocations.

Restart

I clicked Restart.
Her machine hummed.
She purred.
She went to get us coffee.
I plotted about lunch.
Then without warning,
her machine coughed,
wheezed,
shuddered and died,
taking with it
the company’s past and my future.
So now I’m fresh out of money
and fresh out of me,
heading home to my Father’s House,
hoping for a sandwich with the servants,
and the Grace to restart my life again.

Bob McCray

St. Louis, continued from page 15...

committee. All I can give is the gift of myself: my hopes, my concerns, my experiences on my own Precious Blood journey. However small my gifts are, I need to trust that the Spirit will allow me to contribute to the work of our committee and of the body written about in Corinthians.

As I continue to work with the committee, I also see how much I have been gifted by this opportunity. I have been inspired by each of my fellow committee members. I have learned of the richness and diversity in the Precious Blood congregations and how each congregation has its own unique perspective on Precious Blood Spirituality—and yet has so much in common with all the other groups.

My participation in the work of the planning committee and in the Convocation itself will challenge me, stretch me, and bring about growth. I cannot fully explain it yet but, as in the past, my association with Precious Blood people will change my life. Of that, I am sure!

I am sharing my story because perhaps there are other people, especially lay people, who have the same questions and concerns about participating in the Convocation as I have. Perhaps you have not considered attending. But, perhaps you are called to be there.

I would ask you to prayerfully consider these questions: What has Precious Blood Spirituality meant in my life? What are the issues in my church and in the world that have touched me in a special way on my journey? How am I being called to make a difference? What are my gifts?

As you reflect on these questions, and also on 1 Corinthians 12, perhaps you will be called to consider attending the Convocation. If you do, I believe you will be gifted and, in turn, your presence and participation will be a gift to the other participants.

I hope you will “meet me in St. Louis”!

Frank Niemas is a Precious Blood Companion from Orlando, FL.



Enemies: A Love Story

Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S.

Jesus taught that the only way to break the cycle of violence is to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. But, as Dominican theologian Albert Nolan writes in his book, *Jesus Today*, “We don’t take Jesus seriously—we don’t love our enemies, we don’t turn the other cheek, we don’t forgive seventy times seven, we don’t bless those who curse us.”

The image that comes to mind is one Michel Quoist wrote about in one of his books many years ago. He was attending a lecture and the speaker said, “There were two doors in a public place. Over one door was the inscription, ‘Paradise.’ Over the other, ‘Lecture on Paradise.’ Everyone stood in the line for the lecture.” We like to hear about love, read about love, sing about love, pray about love, but when it comes to practicing the quality of love demanded by Jesus and the gospels, many of us stand in the other line.

“So maybe one of the reasons we don’t take Jesus’ teaching about enemy love seriously is because we don’t think we have any enemies. We think of the “enemy” in terms of nations, opponents in war, oppressors and terrorists, and not people we encounter in our daily routine.”

Reconciliation begins with the recognition that each and every human being—even those we call our enemies or our government deems are our enemies—are made in the image of God. Each and every person bears the imprint of the Divine One. We reveal that we are followers of Jesus and not just admirers of his message when we love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. In his book, *Loving Your Enemies*, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. writes that the reason Jesus teaches his followers to love their enemies is because “that love has within it a redemptive power...a power that eventually transforms individuals. That’s why Jesus says, ‘Love your enemies,’ because if you hate your enemies, you have no way to redeem and to transform your enemies. But if you love your enemies, you will discover that the very root of love is the power of redemption.”

Because most of us think of ourselves as nice people who try to get along with others, we might think Jesus’ teaching about love of

enemies doesn’t apply directly to us. Our nation might have adversaries but individually and personally we don’t have enemies. Oh, we have people we don’t like very much, people we try to avoid because they are obnoxious or rude or loud or fill in the blank. We have people who have hurt us—hurt our feelings with an unkind word that cut deeper than we thought possible or bruised our ego or even betrayed our trust. But do we consider them our enemy? Unlike the late former president, Richard Nixon, most of us don’t carry around an “enemies list” of people we think are out to get us.

So maybe one of the reasons we don’t take Jesus’ teaching about enemy love seriously is because we don’t think we have any enemies. We think of the “enemy” in terms of nations, opponents in war, oppressors and terrorists, and not people we encounter in our daily routine.

On a retreat this summer, an Adrian Dominican shared with me a letter from her prioress who recently returned from visiting with Do-



minican sisters in Iraq. The prioress of the Adrian Dominicans met with the General Council of the Iraqi Dominicans. “Would it be possible,” the Iraqi sisters asked her, “that perhaps Dominican women might preach by our actions that one-time enemies can live together, pray together, minister together?”

See *Enemies*, continued on page 22...

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PRECIOUS BLOOD MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

A Ministry of Reconciliation for the Renewal of the Church

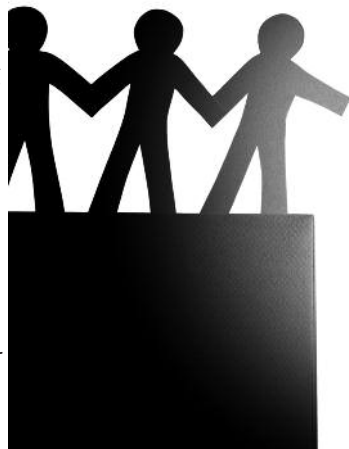
Bill Nordenbrock, C.P.P.S.

We have often shared our ministry in the restorative justice project in Chicago through this *New Creation* column. Ministering to victims of violence and those who do wrong, especially the youth of our neighborhood, is at the heart of our work. It is a ministry that has developed our understanding of reconciliation and the methods which might be used to effect reconciliation.

A less well known aspect of the mission of PBMR is to work for reconciliation within the church. Taking our cue from St. Gaspar, whose ministry of the word renewed the church, from the beginning we have explored how a ministry of reconciliation might be a means of renewal for the church.

The need for reconciliation in the church seems to be self-evident. It is seemingly impossible to gather in a group of Catholic ministers without the conversation becoming a telling of war stories. No matter the ministry setting of the participants—education, parochial, religious congregational leadership or other—soon the topic becomes the difficulty of ministering within a church that is fragmented along ideological and theological lines. The stories will seldom speak of the value or gift of diversity within the affected faith community, because the diversity seems to be inseparably linked to a righteous and vocal intolerance. Usually in these discussions, it becomes quite apparent, although not frequently acknowledged, that the complaining ministers often speak out of their own ideological mind-set and are not innocent bystanders to the conflicts and fragmentation which is their source of concern.

In his book, *A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America*, Peter Steinfels places the contentious and fragmented culture that is visible within the Catholic Church within the broader context of society. Noting the size of the church in



relation to the population of the United States (roughly one fourth of the population), he sees it as inevitable that, as a sub-culture within the whole, the church would be influenced by our national ethos. He writes:

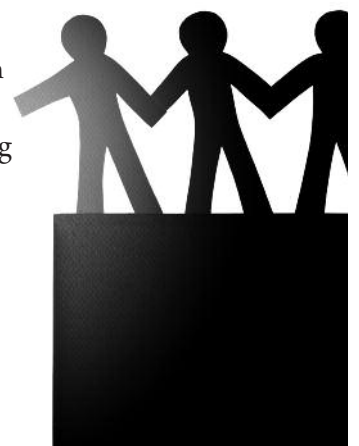
“A church that embraces so many different groups inevitably becomes not only a bridge but also the battleground for the culture wars dividing American society. Many of the issues facing Catholicism mirror those of the larger society: anxiety over rapid change, sexuality, gender roles, the family; a heightening of individualism and distrust of institutions; the tension between inclusiveness and a need for boundaries; a groping for spiritual meaning and identity; doubts about the quality of leadership.”

“The stories will seldom speak of the value or gift of diversity within the affected faith community, because the diversity seems to be inseparably linked to a righteous and vocal intolerance.”

While Steinfel’s observation resonates with a certain obviousness, it raises an important question as to our understanding of the church and the appropriate relationship of the

church to the world. Who should be influencing whom?

To Precious Blood people, the answer to that questions is obvious. We proclaim that the whole world is reconciled to God through the blood of Christ, which brings all things in the heavens and on



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Renewal, continued from page 21...

earth into one under Christ's headship (Eph.1:10b). PBMR makes this proclamation in word and action.

Our ministry of reconciliation for the renewal of the church is multi-faceted. It includes the preaching of retreats and parish mission on the theme of reconciliation. Members of the PBMR staff have also conducted numerous workshops and training programs on the spirituality and practices of reconciliation. Most notably has been the circle training programs that we have promoted and made available for the members of the Precious Blood family. But along with our preaching and teaching, we also have been asked to intervene directly in faith communities that were seeking reconciliation.

Currently, I am ministering with Our Lady of Grace (OLG) parish in Chicago. OLG is a very "normal" parish. They are facing a variety of issues, but they are not at war with each other. It could be tempting for them to say: "We don't need reconciliation; things aren't so bad." Yet, as a normal parish they struggle with trying to remain



Parishioners of OLG gather to imagine a faithful future.

unified as the parish undergoes a complete ethnic transformation as the demographics of the neighborhood changes. They struggle to not allow limited financial resources and budget decisions from fracturing the parish as they struggle to maintain a parochial school. Our Lady of Grace seems to be a "normal" parish with "normal" problems, but they are abnormal, or at least unusual, in that they nurture the hope that a shared vision for the future can strengthen their bonds as a community of faith and bring them to a renewed sense of what it means to be a Catholic parish.

I am accompanying OLG through a process for discernment that is based in the organizational dynamic theory of Appreciative Inquiry. A foundational principle of AI is that a organization or community will move towards its image of its future. A positive image of the future serves as a dream that can inspire the parish and guide its decisions as it seeks to live that dream into reality. Through a hard working leadership team and several work session in which the whole parish was invited to participate, the parish is discerning its faithful future and they are learning to be a community that will be renewed, to be more than a "normal" community in a situation that is "not all that bad."

Fr. Bill Nordenbrock is on the staff of the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation and serves as a member of the General Curia.

Enemies, continued from page 20...

In the letter to her community, the Adrian prioress writes, "We had to come to terms with our personal feelings of shame and our desire for forgiveness. In a similar way, to have the opportunity to speak directly with sisters who never met an American and who each held her own personal feelings of pain and anger was significant in moving another step toward reconciliation and forgiveness."

The Dominican prioress acknowledges how "these are never totally comfortable encounters because they bring us to a reflection on the personal shadows we carry as individuals and as a human race, capable of and culpable for cruelty. Nonetheless, I suspect such meetings are imperative if we are ever to shed the weights we carry from our social sinfulness."

The dialogue between the two Dominicans communities from countries that have been at war with one another continues with the possibility of sisters from Iraq being invited to work in the United States and vice-versa. Such a dialogue may give presidents and politicians pause to remember that there are many living in the United States who have relatives, friends, and community members living in another country they have deemed "the enemy" before deciding to invade that country or start a war.

In his book, *The Magnificent Defeat*, Frederick Buechner outlines four basic kinds of love. The first is "the love for equals" which he describes as "a human thing—of friend for friend, brother for brother." This quality of love is captured in those who form our inner, most intimate circle of relationship, those who see our shadows, scars, and schisms of the heart and still love us.

The second kind of love is "for the less fortunate." Buechner calls this love "a beautiful thing—the love of those who suffer, for those who are poor, the sick, the failures, the unlovely. This is compassion, and it touches the heart of the world." We exercise this quality of love each day in our ministry and our care for those with whom we live and work.

The third kind of love, Buechner writes, is “the love for the more fortunate” which he describes as “a rare thing—to love those who succeed where we fail, to rejoice without envy... the love of the poor for the rich, of the black man for the white man.” This is the love of those we call the saints among us, those who love unconditionally without guile and with abundant grace. This quality of love often stretches us and even confuses us because as Buechner writes, “The world is always bewildered by the saints.”

Then there is the fourth kind of love, “the love for the enemy—love for the one who does not love you but mocks, threatens, and inflicts pain.” This is the love of the victim who forgives the abuser, the love of the one terrorized by torture who forgives the torturers. This is the love that Jesus taught breaks the cycle of violence; the love Martin Luther King said would transform the world. This is the closest thing we know of the love of God that Jesus revealed to the world through the blood of his cross.

This is the love that Jesus calls his followers to live. It is the kind of love that redeems and reclaims the world. To live with this quality of love reflects the heart of a ministry of reconciliation. As Sam Keen writes in his book, *Faces of the Enemy*, “We love or hate our enemies to the same degree that we love or hate ourselves. In the image of the enemy, we find the mirror in which we may see our own face more clearly.”

Like it or not, that face we see is the image of God.

Fr. Joe Nassal is part of the community at Sonnino Mission House in Berkeley. serves on the Province Leadership Team and is involved in the ministry of missions, retreats, and writing.

A Night of Cross Purposes

I raced into the dark night, pushed several angels out of the way, and went climbing my ladder through the growing shadows to find our daughters' cat before the storm hit.

Finally spying the remnants of an empty robin's nest and a certain purring pet licking his paws and belching telltale feathers, I scooped him up and headed back to the house through the beginnings of a light shower.

It was then I fell head first into a hole left by the landscaper who was putting in the water feature. As the rain picked up, I just laid there, sprawled against the fresh black dirt. crying, for some reason I didn't understand, about all the mountains I never climbed, and all those silly dreams from when I was young,

That's when God told me that if I got over my self-pity, He had plenty more dreams to share that He didn't think were silly at all and He still had a fair number of mountains that only I could climb. But first I had to come in out of the rain.

Bob McCray

LOOKING AHEAD

January 10–15 2010

International Symposium

“The Spirituality of the Blood:

Our Mission in Defense
of the Earth Community”

Center of Spirituality

Lima, Peru

February 17–21, 2010

Vietnam Candidates' Retreat

with Frs. Richard Bayuk
and Joe Nassal

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

April 12–14, 2010

2010 Provincial Assembly

Church of the Annunciation

Kearney MO

July 26–29, 2010

Precious Blood Convocation

St. Louis University

St. Louis MO

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Fr. Bill Dineen has moved to
the community retirement
center in Ohio.

His new address is:

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2860 U.S. Route 127

Carthagen, OH 45822-9591

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We invite you to visit our website
where you will find back issues of

The New Wine Press

as well as our weekly newsletter,

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MY BACK PAGES

Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.

“Dear friends. I’m dying. Don’t be upset. I began to die on July 6, 1917. That’s the day I was born, and, in council with what our psalmist says, ‘We who are born, are born to die.’ Now, I heard a little joke that deals with this. A minister was visiting a country church, and he began his sermon with a stirring reminder: ‘Everyone in this parish is going to die!’ The minister looked around. He noticed a man in the front pew, smiling broadly. ‘Why are you so amused?’ he asked. ‘I’m not from this parish,’ the man said. ‘I’m just visiting my sister for the weekend.’”

Mitch Albom, *Have a Little Faith*

The best answer I ever heard to the question “What do you have to do to get to heaven?” came from a first grader. She responded simply, “You have to die.”

It is November again. We just observed All Souls Day, remembering those who have left us through death. The reality of dying is reflected even in the natural world. The scriptures proclaimed at Sunday Mass during these weeks focus more on what is coming, on endings (which are all beginnings, as we experience and believe).

“What happens when we die?” is no doubt a universal question—but maybe the wrong one. Maybe we should ask, “What happens while we are living?” If God is a God of life, of the living, then we are people who affirm and proclaim life in the face of violence and hate death, suffering and poverty and hunger. Hope in the continuity of life, sustains us, strengthens us. Without it, we will indeed die.

Life does indeed continue, we believe, and what we do now, leads to life on the other side. Life in the future is a consequence of how we live now. We have already begun to live eternal life. So we are called to use the gift of life, to share the gift of life.

To share the gift. Sometimes it is not easy to open your hand, especially if you are clutching something [you think is] valuable. Who does not remember from childhood some version of a parent’s voice from the other room, “Let your little brother/sister play with your toys”? And how many of us responded by reaching for the object of our desire and holding it tight. Not unlike my dog who isn’t interested in a certain toy—until another dog goes for it.

This coming Sunday we hear two stories of widows, both of whom were willing to open their hands and relinquish what little they had. Not easy for either of them. In the gospel, Jesus praises the widow who offers her last coins. It seems to have touched his heart, and some see in his response to her sacrifice a recognition of his own immediate future. She gave her all, as he soon would, on a hill outside the city. She opened her hand and surrendered all that she had, as he would soon open his arms in sacrifice.

Money is not the point of this gospel passage; rather it is Jesus and his sacrifice—and our call and challenge to share in that letting go. If eternal life has already begun, then the ultimate letting go in death begins now as well. We call it “dying to self.” A little bit, every day. Not unlike being asked to share our toys.
