

A Journey Into Precious Blood Spirituality



Giano, Italy

St. Gaspar's view as he was sent by the Precious Blood community
to take the devotion of the Blood of Christ out of the sanctuary and into the streets

Welcome

New beginnings are often marked with excitement, but sometimes a tinge of hesitation creeps in. Trust that you have been called to walk down this path to explore Precious Blood Spirituality and discern if God is calling you to expand your relationship with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood by becoming a Companion.

This guide is intended to help you along what we hope will be a spirit-filled journey into discovering more about this spirituality that many hold dear. Your sponsor, convener, and the Companion Directors Team are available to answer any questions that may arise as you delve into this material. We are excited to walk with you on this special journey.

“A dream or vision is not a specific destination that we are trying to reach. Rather, they are more like a compass direction. They point the way of faithfulness for us. What is most important is that we take this journey together.”

~ William Nordenbrock, C.P.P.S. ~

Steps on the Journey



INVITATION

If you received an invitation to an Information Meeting, it's because a priest, brother, or Companion of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood sensed that joining the Companion movement may be a good fit for you. They perhaps saw in you an openness to Precious Blood Spirituality.

The Information Meeting is designed to familiarize you with the history and spirituality of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and the vision of the Companion movement to prepare you to decide if you would like to enter into the inquiry phase.

Often individuals who are attracted to the Companion movement desire to enrich their spiritual lives, become more closely associated with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, or gather with others to enhance their ministry through prayer, study, and sharing.

You are also welcomed to join Companion gatherings as you discern the next steps of your journey.

INQUIRY

The inquiry phase marks the beginning of a period of discernment during which time one explores if God is calling him or her to be a Companion of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood at this time.

Inquiry consists of four reflections that will be the center of discussion during monthly gatherings facilitated by the sponsor or covenanted Companion. The topics are as follows:

- ◇ Discernment: What It Is All About
- ◇ Spirituality of the Precious Blood is Biblical and Centered in Christ
- ◇ In the Company of Friends: Spirituality—The Starting Point
- ◇ Gather Send: The Vision of the Companion Movement

The gatherings will also afford an inquirer the opportunity to interact with the Companions of the group.

The period of Inquiry allows an individual to make an informed decision about whether God is calling them to enter the period of formation at this time.

FORMATION

Formation begins with a welcome rite when the intention of an individual to enter formation is acknowledged and prayerful support of the Companions and the priests and brothers of the Community is pledged.

During formation the candidates reflect individually on the meditations presented in this booklet prior to the monthly gatherings where these topics will be the focus of the discussion. Review of meditations is led by either the sponsor or a covenanted Companion. Sharing is a wonderful way for one's understanding of Precious Blood spirituality to flourish. The candidates will have an opportunity at each gathering to interact, pray, and socialize with the covenanted Companions.

Formation is a time for an individual to continue to listen to God's voice to determine if they are being called to be a Companion at this time. We often hear God's message for us in the activities of our lives, through others, in spiritual reading including Scripture, the meditations in this booklet, as well as the whisper in the silence of our heart.

A candidate intending to become a Companion will have an opportunity during formation to write a one-year covenant with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. The final meditation will be of help as you write your covenant.



COMPANIONSHIP

A Companion makes his or her initial one-year covenant at a provincial assembly or community celebration. Covenanted Companions continue to attend the monthly gatherings, are invited to community events, and engage in active ministry.

A life of a Companion includes ongoing formation enabling one to continually grow in awareness of Precious Blood spirituality and how the Blood of Christ encourages us into ministries with the priests, brothers, and other Companions of the Community. Faith sharing and prayer continues to be an integral means by which we draw strength and hope as we are sent to share our gifts with the rest of the world.

Our vision statement, ***Gather, Send***, calls Companions to bring the cup of their spirituality to ever-widening circles seeking out those that are yearning for this message. As Precious Blood spirituality takes root in our hearts, we step out, stand up, and speak clearly about the Precious Blood of Jesus. (See page 29 for ***Gather, Send*** in its entirety.)

Future covenants are renewed for three years.



Iowa Companions Gather for a Day of Reflection

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Foreword
A Reflection on Our Precious Blood Family
by Kathy Keary, Companion

Among the changes sparked by Vatican II is the idea of religious communities bonding with the laity in community life and ministry. The U.S. Conference of Major Superiors of Men included in their document *Pilgrims and Prophets*:

In the pursuit of a more authentic communion, we find ourselves moving away from the congregational independence which once characterized us and bonding increasingly with others, lay and religious. We are learning to work more closely with women religious, diocesan clergy, and lay ministers. We are just beginning to realize that this collaboration is an enrichment not only for our ministries but also for the life of prayer and community.

After much dialogue within the Community, the first Companion group celebrated the Rite of Welcome in 1990. This rite marks the beginning of a period of formation and prayer during which time a candidate discerns if God is calling them to be a Companion of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. The movement continues to flourish with more than five hundred Companions praying and working alongside the priests and brothers of the Community.

Early on Companions expressed their motivation to be a part of the community as a means to live out their own special vocation animated by the spirituality of the Blood of Christ and in companionship with the priests and brothers of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. They came to realize through faith sharing with the incorporated members that the charism of Gaspar and the spirituality of the congregation was their life force too. They expressed a desire to accompany the priests and brothers of the community in a journey of faith, a path paved with the Blood of Jesus.

Precious Blood Spirituality is centered in Christ. To include laity in the community is consistent with Jesus recruiting his apostles among

“The Companions movement was born at a time when the spirit of renewal fostered by the Second Vatican Council was stirring to find new expressions of collaboration and community in religious life. Models of lay associate programs were evident in many religious communities, but the Companions movement is very much rooted in the reality of our relationship with one another in the blood of Christ. The importance of Companions for me is how the charism of our founder, Gaspar, and the spirituality he proclaimed, is not limited to a chosen few but rather finds its home in the hearts of lay men and women who daily bring the spirituality to life in their families, their work environments, their faith communities, and in all of their relationships.

The strength of the Companion movement is found in these relationships. From the beginning, we never envisioned Companions to be an auxiliary organization or a spiritual support group. Companions are called to be co-creators and collaborators in the work of renewal and reconciliation. Together we form a community that seeks to stand in the breach, offer hospitality and hope, restore relationships, and give voice and a real presence to the power of the precious blood that draws all peoples near.”

~ Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S.

lay people of various occupations. The Gospels are filled with stories of Jesus working side by side with his motley twelve as they went town to town preaching the Good News, ministering to the people, praying, and breaking bread and sharing drink in community.

Communion with the laity was also a hallmark of our founder, St. Gaspar del Bufalo. He sought out people who shared his vision to join him in his ministries. He commented, “We are living in times when it is necessary to form apostolic workers among the people of all ranks.”

“The lay Archconfraternity of the Precious Blood was the womb of the Congregation. The Normative Texts recognize Companions and lay associates as a blessing to the CPPS community. The discernment of the XX General Assembly in 2013 proclaimed that the CPPS will be at our best, most faithful self when we meet this goal: The fullest possible participation of lay associates in our communal life, spirituality and apostolic work. From 1815 to 2015, Companions and lay associates are in our blood. Thanks be to God!” ~ William Nordonbrock, C.PP.S.

Fr. Larry Hemmelgarn, C.PP.S., provincial of the Cincinnati province, provides the following reflection on the inclusion of Companions in the Community today:

Each of us has a vocation rooted in our baptismal call to holiness. I continue to uncover and discover how and where God is calling me as a Precious Blood priest. The creation and addition of the Companions to our community has enriched us greatly because our experience and conversations have been expanded to include how God is calling lay people to be in our world and live their call to holiness. The Companions have broadened our reach as a Community, and have extended our vision. They bring new interpretations of Precious Blood spirituality because they live it out in new ways, in the workplace, in their family life, and in other places where we members may never get to go. They have added a richness to our Community life and strengthened our sense of mission. And invariably, they pitch in! Whenever there is a need for extra hands in our Community life, Companions work willingly to fill it. For all these reasons and more, I’m grateful to all the Companions, including my own mom, who have said yes to God’s call to be in covenant with our Community.

As a Precious Blood Companion, my spirituality, the force that drives me, is centered on the cup of his Most Precious Blood. As I ponder the cup, it is clear that it contains the death and resurrection of Jesus, my sorrows and joys, the struggles and joys of the world, as well as the joys and sorrows of the priests, brothers, Companions, and volunteers of the Community. It is the cup of dying and rising. It can be a difficult cup from which to drink, but my covenant with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood offers me the opportunity to drink the cup in communion with the priests, brothers, Companions, and volunteers of the Community. Drinking the cup in community is at the heart of my relationship as a Companion with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Together we drink the cup and find it to be the source of new life – the wellspring of our salvation, our liberation, our joy, and our hope.

So how have I lived out drinking the cup in community? I have been blessed with many opportunities to serve alongside members and Companions of the Community including serving on staff at a Precious Blood parish, being a part of the Justice and Peace

committee advocating for those on the margins, co-facilitating a prayer group, engaging in prison ministry and now serving as the co-director of the Companion movement. Fulfilling these ministries is enriched when I serve with Precious Blood sisters and brothers because we are united in special way with the blood of Christ as our animator.

The number of ministries that Companions are involved in with others in the Community are too numerous to mention. We each offer our individual gifts to build up the Body of Christ in community. The variety of gifts is amazing. The early Christian community comes to mind as described in the Acts of the Apostles. In the words of St. Paul: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

Our relationship with the community not only brings us together in service but also in prayer. The Eucharist is central in our life as Precious Blood people. Our communal relationship is solidified and celebrated when we gather as family around the table of the Lord. Other opportunities for prayer are commonplace. We are also made aware of the needs within the community, so we can lift up those who are struggling.

A discussion on our community life would not be complete without mentioning our wonderful gatherings to celebrate our common life. Prayer, fellowship, and a delicious meal are standard fare as we renew our friendship and are re-energized to continue our pursuit of drawing all near by the blood of Christ.



Companions and members gather in Rome to celebrate the bicentennial of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

Reflection 1

Discernment

What It Is All About
by Kathy Keary, Companion

Through discernment we come to an awareness of God's will for us. Formation is an opportunity for you to discern if God is calling you to become a Companion of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Learning about Precious Blood Spirituality and the Companion movement will help you on this journey.

It is not uncommon for people to be unaware of how God acts in our lives and tries his best to communicate with each one of us. You do not have to be a saint to get God's attention. He created you out of his unbounded love. You are his child, so of course, you have his heart-felt attention.

The first step in discernment is to pray for God's guidance and wisdom. It makes sense that God desires to help you with this because he has a plan for each one of us. The next step is to create space to hear the still, small voice of God in the depths of your heart. Be on high alert so God's message touches you in such a way that you become aware that he is communicating with you.

One tool to help us in our discernment is guided meditation. After closing your eyes and taking three deep breaths to calm any anxieties you are holding on to, you are invited into an exercise to remind you of how Jesus is the perfect example of someone who emptied himself just like we need to empty ourselves to uncover God's will for us. Jesus did not cling to his divinity but entered into our world taking on our humanity. This emptying allowed him to be the epitome of a faithful, obedient servant. Slowly walk through the following suggestions:

- ◇ Envision all preconceived ideas flowing from your body.
- ◇ Free yourself of all stress.
- ◇ Set aside any distractions that will not allow you to give your full attention to hearing God's voice.
- ◇ Release any attitude of inferiority or superiority.
- ◇ Let go of all biases.
- ◇ Free yourself of your will.
- ◇ Remove your agenda.
- ◇ Discard anything that prevents you from hearing the voice of God.
- ◇ Envision yourself as an empty container made of rose colored glass. Why rose? Allow the rose color to represent the love of the Spirit.
- ◇ Now that you are totally empty, allow God to fill you with his presence.

*"Be tranquil in God and
may his will be the center of your peace."*

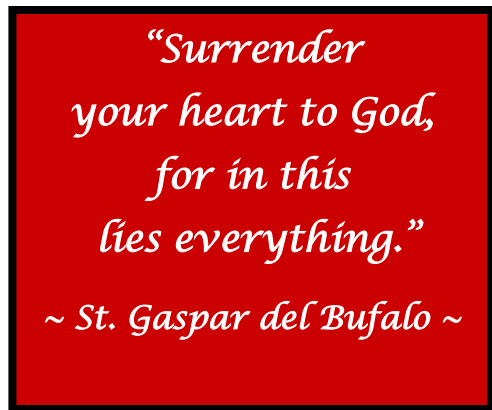
~ St. Gaspar del Bufalo ~

End your meditation with an extended period of silence. Perhaps God has a special message for you today. Often the biggest impediment to discerning God's will is that we are so full of other distractions that it would be impossible for the Spirit of God to enter. An exercise such as this sets the stage to be open to the divine whisper within.

Sometimes God speaks to us through others. Have you ever prayed about something and later in the day someone says something to you that speaks to that very issue? This is way more than coincidental. It's not unusual for God to use the people in our lives to help him communicate with us. Not long ago an opportunity arose. Even though it was appealing, I set it aside with the intention of slowly mulling it over. My thoughts turned to it from time to time. Then someone invited me to seize the opportunity. I told them I would continue to prayerfully discern the possibility. I really did not give it much thought until a few days later someone else suggested that I entertain this pursuit. It was then that I realized that perhaps God was speaking to me through the people in my life. Keeping our eyes, ears, and heart open facilitates God's communication with us.

Another discernment tool is Lectio Divina. It is an ancient form of praying with Scripture. It is a way for God to speak to us personally through these words of old. Read a passage two or three times. Listen for a word or phrase that catches your attention. It is God that is drawing your attention to these words. Meditate on the words. How is God speaking to you through them? Perhaps you will be drawn to journaling your meditation as well as the next step which is to allow your reflection to bring you to prayer. What is your response to God? Are these words calling you to an action? The final step is to rest in God's presence in the stillness of your heart. Writing down the word or phrase each day can be fruitful. This allows us to reflect back on the various words to which God has drawn our attention to perhaps open our hearts and minds to the big picture of what God is saying to us. Seeking the Spirit's guidance when selecting the passage may be fruitful. Sometimes he may lead you to a daily reading. Other times he may direct you to a particular book of the Bible. Many people frequently pray this way, but also turn to this when they really need to hear what God is saying to them.

In our fast paced, noisy world, silence is sometimes a rare but valuable treasure. With a healthy dose of determination, one can often incorporate moments of quiet into their day.



*“Place yourself in
a state of silence.
Do nothing,
but only listen
to the voice of God.”
~ St. Gaspar del Bufalo ~*

Perhaps it is a matter of awakening before everyone in the house has a chance to start rumbling around. Maybe you are a night person and prefer capturing a few moments of solitude when everyone is tucked in for the night. Keeping the radio off in the car can provide the stillness your heart longs for as can a walk. You may enjoy taking time out of your day for centering prayer—a period of just resting in God’s presence. It only makes sense that it is easier to hear the voice of God in the stillness of our soul when the volume and distractions are down. Scripture tells us that Jesus routinely broke away from the crowd and his apostles to commune with the Father.

Sometimes God resorts to communicating with us in dreams. It is prime time to break through when barriers are low. He warned me of my dad’s upcoming passing to the next life in a dream which also assured me that he was going to a place of serenity—a better place.

It is not unusual for God to speak to us through nature. I remember noticing one day when walking along the beach that as soon as I made a footprint in the sand, the water would rush up and wash it away. I sensed that he was telling me to move forward, to leave the old behind, to grow in him, and to make all things new. He was inviting me to leave the past behind, be at peace with the present, and celebrate the possibilities contained in the future.

Don’t be surprised if God calls you to something unexpected or outside your comfort zone. He has a way of doing that, but he gifts you with what you need to fulfill what he is asking you to do. It is amazing how our comfort zones enlarge as we go outside these limiting boundaries. Your gifts may be a clue to what God has in store for you. I used my writing skills in the business world long before I sensed that he was asking me to pursue spiritual writing.

How can you be sure that the message you are receiving is from God? Generally, you will be at peace about the decision. Even though there may be some uneasiness about the possibility of a new challenge, you will probably not be experiencing inner turmoil. If the fruits of the Spirit are present, then the chances are good that God is in the mix: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. If the opposite is present, then it is advisable to further discern God’s will.

God communicates in limitless ways. It makes sense that he would utilize a means that will catch our attention. The manner in which he transmits his message varies from person to person. We invite you to keep your eyes, ears, and heart open to uncover what God has in store for you as you journey through this inquiry phase and perhaps on to formation.



*“May the Lord
give you
his holy inspiration
to decide what is
for his glory,
the only thing
that we must
all search for.”*

~ St. Gaspar del Bufalo ~

*“So let us be united always in prayer;
let us surrender ourselves to the ever lovable will of God,
the only center of peace.”*

~ St. Gaspar del Bufalo ~

For Reflection and Discussion...

How did God communicate with people in the Bible? When have you sensed that God was communicating with you? Has God ever surprised you with what he asked you to do?

Prayer of Discernment by Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S.

O God of Wisdom, grant me the grace of discernment.
As I contemplate our world,
give me eyes to see the pain, the poverty, the violence;
give me ears to hear the cry of the wounded, the suffering, and the marginalized.

Give me, O Merciful God, a compassionate heart
to reach out to my sisters and brothers in their need;
Free me from all that binds me and shake me from my comfort zones,
that I might enjoy that liberation of Spirit
which makes possible a response to the cry of the blood.

Help me to be the voice of those who have no voice.
Grant me the courage to make others aware of the plight of the poor and suffering.
In a world often insensitive and complacent,
caught up in a web of self-interest, consumerism, and materialism
kindle within me the desire to raise a prophetic voice
that calls others to accountability and responsibility for those in need.

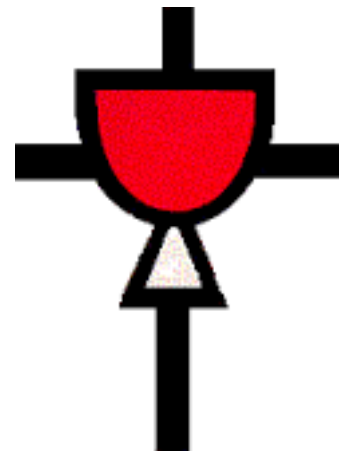
Give me a discerning heart to know how to respond to the cry of the Blood.
Make me a living chalice to carry the Precious Blood to the ends of the earth,
applying its saving balm to the woundedness and brokenness around me.

Where there is brokenness, may I bring the Blood of reconciliation;
Where there is loneliness, may I bring the Blood of covenant;
Where there is despair, may I bring the Blood of hope;
Where there is selfishness, may I bring the Blood of unconditional love;
Where there is disdain, may I bring the Blood of dignity;
Where there is marginalization, may I bring the Blood of inclusion.

May I find nourishment and strength for my journey of compassion
at the Table of the Eucharist:
in the Word broken open
and in Your Body and Blood shared in a spirit of companionship and care.

May I pour out my life each day with generosity and love to further
that “new order of things that Christ brought about in the shedding of
His Precious Blood!”

Amen.



Reflection 2

Spirituality of the Precious Blood is Biblical and Centered in Christ

Blood is Life In his book, *Spirituality of the Blood of Christ*, the late Ernest Ranley, C.P.P.S. states that Precious Blood Spirituality is one of a very few Christian spiritualities that are so profoundly rooted in the whole of Sacred Scripture. In this reflection, our focus will be on the role of blood in the Old Testament.

In the ancient Hebrew culture, blood was not merely a symbol of life but was life itself making all blood sacred. Jewish people today still respect the sanctity of blood. In preparing their kosher meats, the blood is set aside when the animal is slaughtered. It is then poured directly upon the ground.

Blood of Sacrifice Most sacrifices of the ancient Jewish people were sacrifices of animals. The slaughter was carried out with extraordinary care. The blood was carefully set aside. The slaughtered animals were then carefully laid over the firewood on top of the altar. Sometimes the blood was sprinkled upon the altar of sacrifice, sprinkled upon the people or reverently poured out on the ground and covered with earth.

Sacrifices were a profoundly religious activity. Because this activity was held in such high regard, only the finest of animals were chosen. For instance, lambs were required to be over a year old and without blemish.

Jewish Scripture describes two types of sacrifices. The first was a holocaust when all of the animal was totally burned and then offered to the Lord of Life. The second type was the sacrifice of communion in which the better portion of the meat was set aside after being offered in sacrifice and then served to the people in a festive, holy meal. After the Lord of Life received the sacrifice, he then shared it with his people.

The ancient Jewish temple was divided into four parts including a large open gathering space where all were welcome, a space that only Jewish people could enter, an area with a huge altar where the sacrifices took place, and the Holy of Holies, a sacred sanctuary that only the high priest could enter. Once a year the high priest entered the Holy of Holies for the sacrifice of expiation which was a special sacrifice in which the high priest begged God for the forgiveness of the people's sins. The most solemn moment was when the high priest sprinkled the Ark of the Covenant with the blood of a sacrificed lamb. The rite of sacrifice was a significant part of the Jewish religion and the Bible.

*“...this devotion
is the basis,
the sustenance,
the essence of all.”*

~ St. Gaspar del Bufalo ~

*“May the Divine Blood be for us
the fountain of ample blessings.”*

~ St. Gaspar del Bufalo ~

The Blood of the Passover At the time of the Passover, over 500 years had passed since Joseph invited his family to Egypt to escape the famine in Israel. Over time the Israelites became enslaved. God called Moses to free the people from slavery. The Pharaoh refused to listen to Moses, so God sent a series of plagues to persuade him. Pharaoh was not swayed by the first nine plagues or the threat of the tenth plague involving an Angel of Death passing through all of Egypt killing the firstborn of every family. Pursuant to God's revelation, Moses instructed the Jewish people to prepare a special Passover meal and be ready to flee in the dark from Egypt. God gave Moses special instructions to sacrifice a lamb, now called the Paschal lamb. The sacrifice of the Paschal lamb was a sacrifice of communion. Each family ate of the flesh of the sacrificed lamb and took unleavened bread on their journey. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the doorposts of all the Israelites to alert the Angel of Death to pass over their homes. The plan allowed the Israelites to cross the Red Sea to freedom.



Precious Blood Center, Liberty, Missouri

The Jewish people continue to observe the feast of the Passover every year to relive this dramatic, historical moment. The Last Supper was a Passover meal in which Christ became the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The Blood of the Covenant The Book of Exodus describes Moses descending the mountain with the Ten Commandments. God invited the Israelites into a special covenant with him. He promised to be their God and asked them to adhere to the Ten Commandments. After communicating this to the people, Moses asked the members of the twelve tribes of Israel to construct a large altar. Each tribe selected an animal to be sacrificed as a sacrifice of covenant. The animals' blood was diligently set aside. Half of the blood was poured upon the altar of sacrifice. Moses splashed the other blood onto the people as he walked through the crowd saying,



St. Charles Center, Carthage, Ohio

“This is the blood of the covenant. By the blood we now become the people of God, a blood people of God.” The people's participation signified their acceptance of the covenant with God.

At the Last Supper, Jesus took the cup and announced that it was the cup of his Blood. We repeat this in every sacrifice of the Mass. The Blood of Christ is the Blood of the new and eternal covenant.

The Blood that Cries Out to Heaven The story of Cain and Abel is well known. God accepted Abel's sacrifice but did not accept Cain's. Cain became jealous and killed Abel. Scripture says that the blood of Abel cried out to heaven. Fr. Barry Fisher, C.P.P.S. stated, "We should hear the cries of the blood in our world of today." The blood of today's victims of violence and war also cries to heaven for justice and reconciliation. The cries are also raised of the poor, the abandoned, and the marginalized as well as the cries of the people on death row, the cries of victims of injustice, and the cries of the innocent victims of economic systems that leave billions of people in poverty. A spirituality of the blood makes us more sensitive to these cries of the blood and compels us to react to the cries of the innocent blood so rampant in our world today.

*The
Cry
of
the
Blood*

Spirituality of the Precious Blood is Centered in Christ

We will focus our attention on the seven blood sheddings of Christ: the Circumcision, the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging at the Pillar, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, the Crucifixion, and the Opening of the Heart of Jesus on the Cross. We will then take a look at a passage from the Letter to the Hebrews that sums up Precious Blood spirituality beautifully.

The Seven Blood Sheddings of Jesus Circumcision marked a Jewish male as a person of God. It was a sign of the covenant of the people with their God. Following Mosaic Law, Mary and Joseph presented Jesus for circumcision when he was eight days old.

The second blood shedding was The Agony in the Garden. In anticipation of his death, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane. The Gospels of both Matthew and Mark stressed Jesus' sense of fear and apprehension before his arrest, torture, and death on the cross. The Gospel of Matthew states: "And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want...if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.'" The Gospel of Luke describes that Jesus' sweat became drops of blood. This is the Agony in the Garden. His earnest prayer was in preparation for the courage and strength that would be needed to face the cruelty and injustice of which he would soon become the victim. Fr. Ernest Ranelly, C.P.P.S. states:

The shedding of the Blood is a sign of Jesus' strength, of his courage, and of his determination to fulfill the will of the Father—to drink the cup of suffering that he must drink. He will drink it with courage, with dignity, and with a sense of humanity to complete the will of the Father in our name.

The Scourging at the Pillar is the third blood shedding. Jesus endured a vicious whipping. The traditional number of whips is 40 lashes of a leather whip across the back. This torture broke Jesus' skin allowing the blood to flow.

*"May the price
of our redemption
always be blessed."*

~ St. Gaspar del Bufalo ~

The fourth shedding of blood is that of The Crowning with Thorns. After Jesus is turned over to the Roman soldiers, they ridicule and mock him. They made a crown of thorns and placed the crown on his head calling him the King of the Jews. The skin of his forehead was pierced and blood spilled out profusely over his face. Not only did Jesus

suffer human humiliation but he suffers extreme pain.

In Fr. Ernest Ranley's book, *Spirituality of The Blood of Christ*, he elaborates about torture in today's world stating:

Certainly, in our day and age, we should reflect upon the problem of torture, which is unlawful, inhuman, cruel torture against our fellow human beings. We should begin to understand that even prisoners and those accused, even when they are guilty of serious crimes, still have human dignity and should be respected. The cruelty of the crowning with thorns and the scourging at the pillar, against this innocent carpenter's son from Nazareth, should give us a sense of identity with the victims of torture, terrorism, and cruelty in the world of today.

*"Blessed are we,
therefore, to whom it
is granted to drink
some little drop of
that bitter chalice,
which Jesus drank
in love for us to the
very last drop."*

~ St. Gaspar del Bufalo ~

The fifth blood shedding involves the blood shedding associated with the Carrying of the Cross. As the Stations of the Cross detail, Jesus fell three times under the weight of the cross. This act not only caused pain, struggle, and humiliation but once again resulted in the shedding of Jesus' blood.

The Crucifixion is the sixth blood shedding. Jesus is nailed to the cross with spikes through his wrists and feet. Not only did this result in excruciating pain, blood was shed as you can well imagine.

A Roman soldier inflicted the seventh shedding of blood by piercing the side of Jesus with his sword. The blade pierced so deeply that it penetrated his heart. As his heart was cut open, the last drops of blood and water flowed out. Ernest Ranley, C.P.P.S. states:

Christian tradition will see in this the great love of our Lord, the love of the Sacred Heart, and the shedding of the last drops of his Blood for us and for our redemption. Also, the fathers of the Church see in this moment that the water and blood flowing from the heart of Jesus are symbols and signs of the sacraments of Baptism and of the Holy Eucharist.

A review of the seven Blood sheddings of Jesus makes it clear that Precious Blood Spirituality is centered on the person of Jesus Christ in the most personal and intimate way possible. These sheddings reveal Jesus' great love for us and obedience to the Father in the supreme act of redemption for all of humanity.



The Blood of Christ in the New Testament

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things which have come to be, he entered once for all into the sanctuary, passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation. He entered, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, and achieved eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of the heifer's ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself up unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God! (Hebrews 9:11-14).

This reading from the Letter of Hebrews summarizes all we have said in this reflection about the significance of the Old Testament sacrifice as it relates to the Blood of the New Covenant, the Blood of Christ. Studying the Precious Blood in this way draws us into a deeper understanding of how this spirituality is centered in Christ Jesus as high priest, as victim, and as a sacrifice of blood for the redemption of humankind. As Jesus comes into the Holy of Holies with his own Blood, he is pleading with the Father for mercy, for forgiveness, and for expiation of our sins. As Ernest Ranley, C.PP.S. says, “If the people of Israel had felt cleansed and purified and pardoned of their sins by the blood of animals, how much more should we now feel purified, sanctified, forgiven, and pardoned of our sins by the Blood of Christ.”

The Book of Revelation speaks of the celebration of the marriage feast in the heavens. In the words of Ernest Ranley, C.PP.S., the Lamb of God is now portrayed as a “Blood of glory, a Blood of triumph, and the Lamb of God is standing before the throne of God and his Blood now is a sign of victory, of triumph, of joy, and of feasting.” Ranley describes the culmination of the Blood of Christ:

In the picture of the persecuted people (the martyrs of the time) there is this figure of this immense crowd of people before the throne of God (those saved, the saints of heaven) and they have washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb. Their garments are white and brilliant because the people have been cleansed of their sins and now are glorified through the Blood of the Lamb.



Statue of
St. Gaspar del Bufalo
St. Charles Center,
Carthagen, Ohio

(Reference: Ranley, Ernest, C.PP.S., *Spirituality of the Blood of Christ*, The Messenger Press, 2010.)

For Reflection and Discussion...

The words “blood of the covenant” stress our unity and integration in the total human family. We are all brothers and sisters created in the divine image. Reflect on examples of diverse people coming together as one human family. Where do we see division and discord that begs for unity and peace?

What steps can we take to promote unity among all people regardless of differences?

The spirituality of the Blood of Christ views blood as life, and all life is sacred. This leads to the conviction that we must defend all life from conception to natural death. Our world is filled with examples in which the dignity of the human person is not respected. Name these violations and possible remedies. How can we promote the sanctity of all people?

Woman of the New Covenant

by Madeleine Kisner, ASC—US Adorers

Throughout the Covenants of the Old Law
Promises were made with the Patriarchs, Kings and Prophets
That God would protect and guide His Chosen People.
Desiring them to follow His statutes and commands,
God set forth His solemn Mosaic agreement,
Signed and delivered under the seal of His inscribed Word.

This Old Covenant, however, was but a shadow of the New—

For, with Her fiat, Mary, the new Eve,
Became the Mother of God's son in the New Law.
Having crushed the head of the Edenic serpent,
Mary endorsed the promised of the New Covenant,
Made through the death of Her beloved Son
As He hung from Calvary's gibbet.
Christ's stipulation to His Mother, beneath the Cross,
Put Mary in charge of His Beloved Apostle.
Christ, likewise, bequeathed His Mother to be our Mother, too.
Thus, Mary became the new Covenant witness
To the contract offered by Her Son, Who
Sealed the Blood-bond with His dying Word:
"It is finished!"

Truly, the Blood of Christ inaugurated the New Covenant,
A divine promise by which God reconciled us with Himself.
Moreover, He pledged his alliance with us forever,
By leaving us Himself in the Eucharist.
Assuredly, in and through Mary,
WOMAN OF THE NEW COVENANT,
The Promise and Price of our Redemption was realized.



Reflection 3

In the Company of Friends

Spirituality
The Starting Point

“When the hour came, Jesus took his place at table with the apostles. He said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer’” (Luke 22:14b-15). The gathering place for Companions is around the table—in the company of friends. It is the starting point and space to which we return. There we eagerly desire to share stories of lives poured out in loving service.

Jesus included the phrase “before I suffer...” Paula Ripple writes, “The man who left that table to cry out to his Father, in the garden and later from the cross, does not claim to lead us to some secure harbor where we can hide and live untroubled lives.”

Companions leave that table as the starting point for lives:

- poured out in service of the reign of God;
- bonded in love with all, especially those on the margins of society;
- caught up in a common vision shared with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

“This is the heart of what the Companions program seeks to do: to create a caring, compassionate community of love and service. We seek to become those thousand tongues that proclaim the healing grace and glory of the Precious Blood in a wounded world which so often bears the scars of sin and division. The charism of compassion coupled with our community life deepens our desire to invite others to join us to move all hearts to the Precious Blood of Christ!”

~ Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S. ~

Transformation: Letting Go

Our founder, St. Gaspar del Bufalo, certainly did not live an untroubled life nor claim to lead the men in his Institute to some secure harbor where they could hide. Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S. continues in Gaspar’s spirit saying, “To hear the cry of the blood is unsettling. It disturbs our peace.”



St. Gaspar del Bufalo

Gaspar encountered enemies and troublesome times, yet he faced difficulties with unshakable faith. “God will not fail to assist us,” he wrote to a member in 1820. “The more hopeless human means appear to us, so much more does confidence in God increase. God will take care of things.” Trials for Gaspar were occasions inviting him to change.

He taught that “excessive attachment to our own opinions, views and desires” is an obstacle that keeps us from “walking in the ways of Christ.” Following Jesus in fidelity to the Gospels often requires a major change in our opinions, views and desires. Letting go is never easy, as the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin wrote in *The Gift of Peace*: “By letting go I mean the ability to release from our grasp those things that inhibit us from

developing an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus.” Gaspar would have us know that hardship offers us occasions for deepening our relationships with Jesus.

We let go so we can have empty hands for what God wants to give us. Fr. Barry Fischer calls this stance “faithful creativity.” Benedictine monk Godfrey Diekmann writes: “We acknowledge that Christ, of course, is the true Son of God. But we are also true sons and daughters of God, not by nature but by gift, and this is actually sharing the life of God.” As each offertory reminds us: “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”

*Hardship offers
us occasions
for deepening
our relationship
with Jesus.*

How do we share in the divinity of Christ? It is in and through the Blood of Jesus that we have been brought near. Saint John Paul II writes in his apostolic exhortation, *The Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful People*, that the baptized participate in the mission of Christ. We are all holy, he writes, “we are all ‘anointed’ and in him are all ‘christs,’ that is, ‘anointed ones.’ Through baptism the lay faithful are made one body with Christ and are established among the people of God. They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ.”

In Romans 12:1 we read that the offering of our daily activities unites us to Jesus’ offering of himself on the cross. We continue the transforming power of the Eucharist in our common ordinary actions.

Transforming the Ordinary Into the Holy

During their gatherings through the course of one year, the Companions of Rensselaer, IN were reading Fr. Joe Nassal’s book *Passionate Pilgrims*. In day 5, early evening of his book, Fr. Nassal refers to transforming the ordinary into the sacred. He writes, “this covenant causes us to be changed, to be transformed, to be agents of transformation. We are challenged at each and every Eucharist to be messengers and midwives of the reign of God in our world today” (p 64).

In their discussion at one gathering, the Companions were asked, “Do you see yourself acting to transform the ordinary into the holy as a priest transforms the bread and wine? In what ways?”

The questions were framed within the context of a discussion on Eucharist. At Mass, the celebrant transforms bread and wine, common artifacts, into something precious and holy. After participating in the banquet, we ordinary people are transformed into the body of Christ, something precious and holy. We then go forth into the world. It is there in the world that we ourselves perform the priestly function of transforming the ordinary into the holy, thus being

*“Through baptism the lay faithful are made one body
with Christ and are established among the people of God.
They are in their own way made sharers in the
priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ.”*

~ St. John Paul II ~

midwives of the reign of God. This idea was illustrated beautifully when Companion Mary Ellen Kreilkamp told this story.

For years Mary Ellen had been in the habit of going to daily Mass. Then she took a job as a librarian in an elementary school in Rensselaer that conflicted with the Mass schedule. She was unable to attend. This was a source of sadness for her. But, in the place of Mass, God had chosen to use Mary Ellen in the priestly work of transforming the ordinary into the holy. Mary Ellen was completely unaware of this until it emerged as a result of the discussion at that Companions gathering.

As librarian, Mary Ellen had to shelve an enormous number of books every day. When some of the children volunteered to help her, she allowed them to take the books to the proper section and lay them on top of the shelves where she would eventually properly order the books. This proved to be a great help to Mary Ellen, but what it did for the kids who helped her was surprising. These children many of whom were challenged by non-supportive and dysfunctional home environments, found that they were needed by an adult they liked and trusted. Because they liked being needed, more and more of them volunteered to help her. As the kids shelved the books, they became interested in the books and began to reserve them for when it was their turn to go to the library and take out books. Soon, an entire bottom shelf of Mary Ellen's desk was filled with these reserved books.

Even though Mary Ellen had to give up going to daily Mass because of her job in the library, what she did for those kids was priestly work. She transformed those kids from the ordinary to the holy. She transformed them from "just kids" to kids who were wanted, needed, and valuable, who could perform a ministry for someone and be appreciated for it. As a bonus, they became interested in books.

Fr. Mark Peres, C.P.P.S., pointed out that when he consecrates the bread and wine at Mass, it looks the same after the consecration as it did before. He went on to observe that often, transforming the ordinary into the holy is simply a matter of transforming our perception. We come to see that what we thought was ordinary was really holy all along. It is our perception of the thing or of the person that has changed.

So the work of transforming the ordinary into the holy often involves transforming our perceptions, our observations and our understanding of people and events. For Companions Rose Lansdown, Mary Lou Potts and Geraldine Dill work in the RCIA and the children's Catechumenate often involves taking catechumens who see themselves as ordinary or common, and transforming their perceptions until they see themselves as the holy people they have always been, called by name to be children of God. In a wonderful way, this is what conversion is: seeing the holy in what seems ordinary.

As Companions, we no longer see those who have been redeemed by the Blood as



Timothy Armbruster, C.P.P.S. distributes communion on Feast of the Precious Blood at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome during the Bicentennial Pilgrimage.

ordinary, as common, as marginalized. In a priestly act, we transform them into the holy. This often involves a transformation of our vision from old perceptions to new ones. Where we once saw only brokenness, we now see self sacrifice. Where we once saw slavery, we now see freedom. Where we once saw death and dying, we now see rising and new life. Where we once saw only sin, we now see forgiveness. Where we once saw only duty, we now see privilege. Where we once perceived shabbiness and squalor, we now see simplicity and beauty.

*“Let us renew our
most intimate union
in Jesus Christ,
the only delight
of our hearts.”*

~ St. Gaspar del Bufalo ~

Where we once saw only a man in poor-man’s clothes, we now see the body of Christ. We see seeds and think flowers. We see caterpillars and think butterflies.



Covenant Rite at St. Charles Center in Carthagen, Ohio during the Companion retreat

For Reflection and Discussion...

Give illustrations of your experience in letting go of your own opinions, views, and desires and how that has transformed your life.

How would you respond to the question posed to the Companions of Rensselaer: “Do you see your self acting to transform the ordinary into the holy as a priest transforms the bread and wine? In what ways?”

*“May Jesus be in your mind, Jesus in your heart,
Jesus on your lips, Jesus in all your works.”*

~ St. Gaspar del Bufalo ~

Psalm for a New Creation

by Joseph Nassal, C.PP.S.

Compassionate Creator,
to be created anew,
we must be willing to touch the emptiness inside.
We must be willing to face the void.
We must be willing to break out of the constrictions
that seek to bind us,
and the routine that blinds us.
We must be willing to take the risks necessary to see
what we have failed to see before.

Each day offers us the opportunity
to embrace the challenge to be created anew.
This is all that matters:
that we see with new eyes;
that we are open to new possibilities;
that we touch new dreams that afford us a wider view,
a larger heart.

Good and Gracious God,
through the intercession of your servants,
Gaspar del Bufalo, Theresa Weber, Maria Anna Brunner,
give us the courage to become
a new creation.



The Young Adult Task Force made up of participants from around the county gathers in Liberty, MO.

GATHER**SEND****Called by the Cry of the Blood,**

Companions are sealed with their covenants as an integral, living part of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Through that covenant relationship, we gather, and then are sent to bring hope and reconciliation to a wounded world.

We are accepted for who we are,

in the diversity of God's creation, and we know that we belong to the Precious Blood family around the world. We have an intentional, evolving relationship with the Community, praying and working together as Missionaries, as St. Gaspar inspires us to do. Proclaiming that all blood is precious, we are ambassadors of Christ to the edges of society.

The Blood of Christ empowers us

in our own ministries and encourages us into ministry with the priests and brothers of the Community.

Out of the sacred space of our gatherings,

we draw strength and hope. From those gatherings, our time spent in Community, and our mission houses, we are sent. We are called to share the gifts we have been given with the rest of the world.

We bring the cup of our spirituality

to ever-widening circles, to people of all generations, races and cultures. We seek out those who are yearning for this message, and invite them, the way that we were invited.

Precious Blood spirituality has taken root

in our hearts. We step out, stand up, and speak clearly about the Precious Blood of Jesus.

Living into Gather Send

The creation of ***Gather, Send*** was a Spirit-led endeavor. Fr. Dave Matz, C.P.P.S. conducted an appreciative discernment visiting every companion group around the country and gathering input from each individual. The Companion Council prayerfully reviewed and savored the hopes and dreams expressed by the Companions and their sponsors. ***Gather, Send*** was composed as a result of this thoughtful reflection.

Christianity is rooted in the gather-send mindset. We find repeatedly in Scripture that Jesus gathered with his apostles before they were sent out to minister to the people. I imagine that Jesus renewed a sense of strength and courage at the Last Supper before he freely entered into the ultimate mission of shedding his blood to set his people free. Following in his footsteps, the apostles were gathered together the day of Pentecost. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and gifted with special attributes to go out into the world to spread the Good News to all nations. The tradition of gathering was evident in the early Christian communities. Today our gatherings continue to be a source of strength and hope for Companions.

The gathering bears fruit in the sending. We are sent out to be Christ in the world. We go forward to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. We continue to be beacons of hope and reconciliation to the wounded and broken. Sustained by the gatherings, we become a source of liberation for those that struggle.

How can we accomplish so much? The task may seem daunting. Our Creator showers us with the gifts we need to bring about the kingdom of God that stands ready to be embraced. St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians eloquently elaborates: “Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

Called by the cry of the Blood

*We are accepted
for who we are...*

*The Blood of
Christ
empowers us...*



*Out of the sacred space
of our gatherings...*

We bring the cup

*Precious Blood
Spirituality
has taken root...*

Personal discernment will lead us to an awareness of God's plan for us. He assures us that he will give us whatever we need to fulfill the ministry to which he calls us. He never abandons us as we endeavor to bring about his reign in our time and place. The ministries to which God calls his people are as numerous as the grains of sand on the beach.

He summons some to travel to far off lands to serve in developing countries while he asks most of us to extend his love to others right where we are in our families and neighborhoods. Some will proclaim his Word or distribute the Eucharist at Mass or to the homebound. Others will feed the hungry or shelter the homeless. Some will stand up for justice. Others will go to the edges of society to serve the excluded and abandoned. The needs to be fulfilled are endless, but God has a lot of workers in the field. It is up to each one of us to listen to the still, small voice that calls us by name. We serve and then are brought back to community to be refreshed as we continue to do God's work.

For many, making a covenant with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood as a Companion is a meaningful way to live out our baptismal promises. As baptized followers of Christ, we have been buried with him in this Sacrament so that we may walk with him in newness of life as we embrace the Paschal Mystery: the Life, Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord. This commitment enables us to hear the cry of the Blood. Empowered by the Blood of Christ, we respond to God's invitation to serve.

With a sense of gratitude, Companions are moved to share the benefits they have derived from the Companion movement to others. In the spirit of inclusivity, our vision challenges us to reach out to all generations, races, and cultures. Precious Blood spirituality has touched us deeply motivating Companions to step out, stand up and speak clearly about the Precious Blood of Jesus.

"We are living in times when it is necessary to form apostolic workers among people of all ranks."

~ St. Gaspar del Bufalo ~

*Step Out
Stand Up
Speak Clearly
About the Precious Blood of Jesus*

For Reflection and Discussion...

What words in ***Gather, Send*** resonate with you? What words do you find challenging? What words do you instantly embrace?



Left:
Companion
Participating
in the
Kansas City
Provincial
Assembly



Right:
Companions
gathered for
retreat in
Carthage,
Ohio

Let us Pray...

Let's engage in an ancient form of prayer called Lectio Divina. This is a prayer type in which God speaks to his people today through the words of old found in Scripture. First call upon the Holy Spirit to open your heart to his inspiration. The following will suffice:

Spirit of God, please open my heart and mind to embrace the word or phrase to which you are calling my attention.

Read the following Scripture passage two or three times. Underline the word or phrase to which God is calling your attention.

“When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release
to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down, the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them: ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’” (Luke 4:16—22).

Meditate on the word or phrase to which your attention was drawn. What thoughts come to mind as you savor these words? How do you hear God speaking to you through these words. What particularly touches your soul.

Next allow your meditation to bring you to prayer. What is your response to God sparked by these words and this prayer time?

Now spend a moment resting in God. Allow him to totally envelop you in his love and peace.



Companion Welcome Rite

The ceremony is to be embellished with prayer, intercessions, and song when possible.

Convener: The following have completed the inquiry deliberations: (...names...)

Each responds with “present” as his or her name is called.

It is their intention to enter formation, continuing their journey toward becoming a Precious Blood Companion.

Provincial Director or his representative: I, (name), representing the provincial directors of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, extend to each of you an official welcome.

In the words of our founder, St. Gaspar: “Let us, indeed, become strengthened through the Blood of Jesus Christ.” May your reflections on the meditations and your continuing journey with Companions and the incorporated members of our Society of Apostolic Life bring you to a clearer discernment of your call so that you may respond in faithful creativity.

Be assured of the prayerful assistance of all the Companions and incorporated missionaries of the Precious Blood. Welcome!



Welcome



Community, mission, and spirituality are the pillars of the Precious Blood Community. In this meditation, our focus turns to community. Community also makes up the cast of bible story after bible story. What did Mary do when she learned that she was to be the mother of the Son of God? With haste, she traveled to be with her cousin, Elizabeth, who was also with child. Elizabeth enthusiastically shared that her baby leaped in her womb at the sound of Mary's greeting. Mary then expressed the deepest stirring of her heart as she proclaimed what would be known as the Magnificat: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant..." Both pregnancies were unexpected, and I imagine both women were puzzled and uncertain about what the future held. They gained strength and courage from each other as they told their stories and listened intently to one another. In the words of the late Henri Nouwen, "God does not want to isolate us by his grace. On the contrary, he wants us to form new friendships and a new community—holy places where his grace can grow to fullness and bear fruit."

Conversation is at the center of a flourishing community. Companion gatherings offer the opportunity for spiritual growth through faith sharing not only on an individual basis but also on a group level. In dialogue, we provide encouragement to one another as we voice how we are living out our Precious Blood spirituality. We broaden our perspective as we hear the views of others. We are enriched when we learn of the moments of grace in the life of our fellow Companions as well as when we embrace the opportunity to share our God moments with others. We grow as we listen intently to one another and allow the words of others to enter into our hearts. Prayerful listening and sharing fortifies the foundation of community.

Prayerful listening is rooted in the reality that the Spirit of God lives within each one of us. As the Acts of the Apostles so eloquently expresses: "For in him we live and move and have our being." Inspired by this presence, we speak from the heart in sacred sharing. With reverence, we intently take in what the other offers as we engage in prayerful listening.

Prayerful listening is rooted in the reality that the Spirit of God lives within each one of us.

Let's take a look at things to avoid when prayerfully listening. It is not uncommon for a person to be thinking about what they intend to say next instead of truly listening to another. So often instead of just listening, we interrupt, offer solutions to dilemmas that are raised, try to dissect the situation the speaker describes, minimize the speaker's story by recounting a similar experience turning the focus to ourselves, downplay a struggle with comments such as, "everything will be alright," or lecturing a person. These responses do not create a safe environment

conducive to deep sharing.

Instead of providing a fix or a solution to another person's sharing, prayerful listening is about being present to the other using non-verbal cues such as eye-contact, nodding, and smiling to demonstrate that you are engaged in what the person is offering. Silence following the sharing reverences what was said as well as allows a moment for inner reflection and a moment to hold the speaker and their words in prayer. Mary teaches us at the Annunciation the value of pondering. Confidentiality is also key. What is said in the group stays in the group.

Prayerful listening is not an art that is frequently practiced in our culture, so it may be helpful to create processes that facilitate this type of spiritual activity. Some groups find it helpful to designate something that can be held in one's hand as a talking piece. When a person has the talking piece, it is their turn to share while the others listen. The talking piece can then go to the person sitting next to him/her designating it is now their turn to share. If you prefer, the original person who shared can place the talking piece in the center. As people are moved by the Spirit, they can pick up the talking piece and take their turn sharing while everyone else reverently opens their hearts and ears to the sharer's message. An alternative is to allow the sharer to select the next person to speak.

Depth can be added to the experience when participants, who feel moved, respond to what has been said with an affirmation, a reflection on how you were touched by what was said, or sharing a prayerful connection to what was said such as a Scripture passage that came to mind. Of course, this is not the time to judge, solve an issue, diagnose the situation, or project one's own agenda.

God speaks to us through the circumstances of our lives. Putting voice to those events can clarify God's actions for us. An invitation or challenge may be revealed as we tell our story. When our story is accepted without judgment, healing is possible. As we experience the love of the group, we encounter God's love.

Like acquiring any new skill, it takes practice to become proficient. Don't expect your group to instantly be able to engage in contemplative listening. Be patient with yourselves as you allow each Companion to share from the recesses of their heart. Allow yourself to be touched by their words. Savor the experience as these words touch your soul.

God speaks to us through the circumstances of our lives.

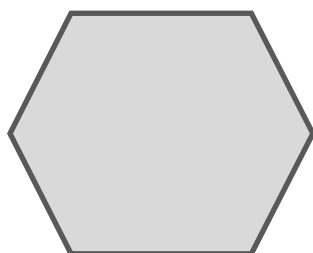
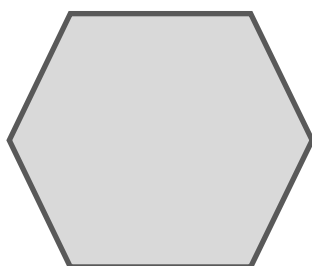
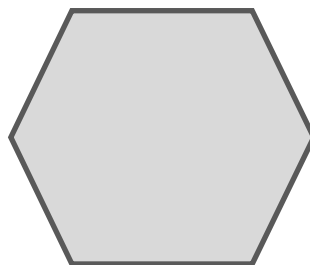
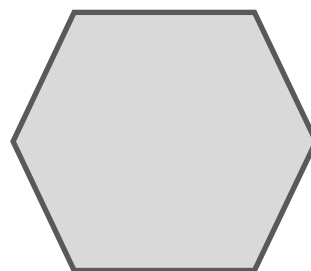
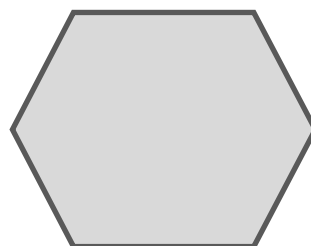
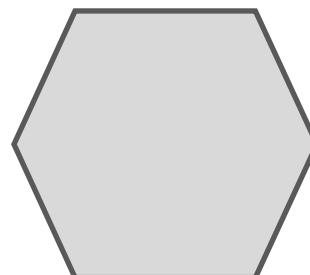
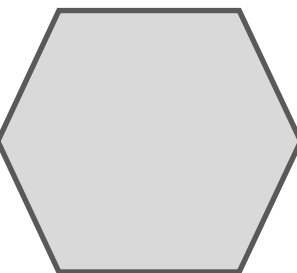


Companions
engaged in
reflection and
discussion at
the Companion
retreat in
Liberty, MO

For Reflection and Discussion...

Looking back at our faith journeys can be a spiritually enlightening task. Our relationship with God is similar to our relationship with others. It is frequently marked by twist and turns, hills and valleys, smooth spots as well as rough terrain. Reflect on the story of your faith throughout your life. Write a highlight on each stone. Where was God at those times? What did your interaction with him look like? Where did you typically meet him? How did others fit into your spiritual life? Who joined you in your faith journey at various steps? Did your relationship with God and others call you beyond yourself into service?

After you have filled in the stepping stones, meditate on your path. How is God speaking to you today as you review your history with him and his people? Is he calling you to change or to action or to continue what you are doing? Jot down how you sense God is leading you.



What is your response to God? Conclude this exercise with a prayer followed by taking a moment to just rest in God. Savor the silence in the presence of the One who loves you beyond measure.

Prayer to Begin a Precious Blood Gathering

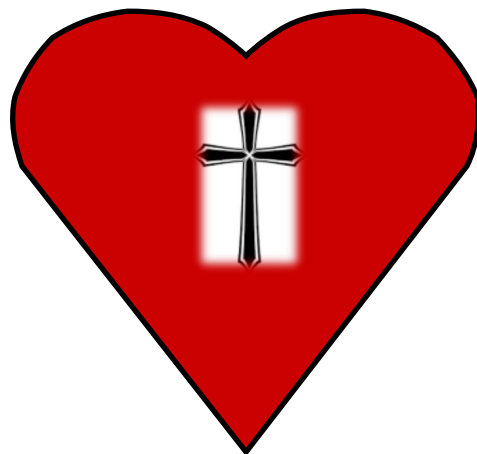
by Mark Miller, C.P.P.S.

O God, creator and sustainer of life,
you sent Jesus into our world as a
sign of unconditional love,
As Jesus poured out his life for the sake of all,
grant us strength to do the same.

Be with us during this time of gathering.
Empower us with your spirit of
reconciliation and renewal,
your spirit of hope and of healing,
your spirit of communion and compassion.

Guide us as we open our minds and
hearts to you and to one another.
Walk with us on our journey to the
many tables of life. Embrace us with
your passionate love.

Remind us of the stories of old,
of Abraham and Sarah,
of Moses and Miriam,
of Jesus and Mary,
of Gaspar and Maria De Mattias,
of Francis Pfanner, (*and N...*).
Help us remember in whose steps we follow
and with whom we minister.
May our community life and
our shared ministries
preach and teach the
mysteries of the reign of God.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Meditation 2

A Mingling of Memory and Mercy

Spirituality of the Cup
by Joseph Nassal, C.PP.S

“Blood,” Archbishop Oscar Romero once said, “is the most eloquent of words.” In this chapter we will explore what we see when we look into the chalice filled to the brim with the Blood of Christ. When we see this wine which celebrates our identity as Companions of the Blood of Christ, do we see how this most meaningful of words, blood, calls us to an eloquent witness?

Several years ago I was polishing the chalice my family gave me on my ordination. The silver on the outside of the cup had become tarnished over the years. As I was sitting holding the chalice, the verse from the first letter of Peter came to mind: “Realize that you were delivered from your futile way of life not by any diminishable sum of silver or gold...but by

Christ’s blood beyond all price” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

When my family gave me the chalice, I doubt they had Peter’s principle in mind. But as I sat there that morning, polishing the silver on the outside of the chalice and seeing the gold on the inside, Peter’s words seemed to apply. The glitter of gold will fade; the sterling silver will tarnish; but the Blood of Christ poured into this chalice will continue to redeem.

*“... the Blood of Christ
poured into this chalice
will continue to redeem.”*

In this chapter, then, we are invited to look closely at the contents of the cup. Can we see the reflection of our own faces? It is in seeing our own reflection in the Blood of Christ that we will find mingled there the meaning, the memory, and the mercy contained in the spirituality of the cup.

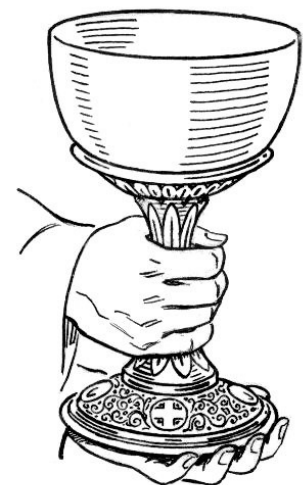
The Meaning: Can We Drink the Cup?

As we look into the cup, we hear the echoes of the question Jesus posed to his disciples, “Can you drink this cup?” (Matthew 20:22) This is the question facing those who aspire to live as Companions of the Blood of Christ. It is the question Jesus asked James and John after their mother pleads on their behalf that Jesus find them a high place at heaven’s table. The question seems so simple and straightforward. Can you drink this cup? As we look at the chalice filled with wine, we might be tempted to blurt out as James and John did, “Well, yes, of course we can!”

But when we look at this cup, really look at it, we might pause and ponder the meaning of the question. When we look at this cup and see how this cup has caught our tears from sorrows we can barely name, from pain we can barely claim, from wounds we want to forget, can we drink the cup?

When we see how this cup has caught our fear of loving without counting the cost, or our fear of changes that come too quickly or too slowly, or the shame we embrace of the guilt so pervasive that forgiveness seems out of reach, can we drink this cup?

When we see how this cup has caught our indifference at



*Can
We
Drink
This
Cup?*

another's suffering, or our blindness to look of regret in another's eyes, or our silence in the face of injustice, can we drink this cup?

When we see how this cup has caught the words another spoke that hurt us to the core, or the anger that simmers on our soul's back burner, or the lack of appreciation we feel or the want of encouragement we need, or the busyness that consumes our days or the loneliness that lingers through the night, can we drink this cup?

When we see how the cup holds the courage to speak our truth though we know we'll be opposed, lose a few friends, distance a few relatives, rattle a few cages, see a few hands close into a fist, can we drink this cup?

Can we drink this cup when we know the vintage wine it holds will make us bold in living and maybe even dying for what we believe? Dying not for ideas or ideology; or even for causes no matter how just, but for people, real people, holy, human beings. Can we drink this cup?

Can we drink this cup when a single sip takes us on a trip through killing fields marked with crosses, landscapes littered with losses, until we arrive at a lonely hill when we will be stripped and shamed, beaten and blamed, with nothing left to pray except, "Why? Why, God? Why have you forsaken me?"

Can we drink this cup after smelling its bitter bouquet? But rather than bristling at the steward for serving a vintage more like vinegar than wine, we know this one will have to do. Because this one, this vintage, contains all our suffering and all our sorrow, all our tears and all our fears, all our regrets and all our remorse, all our shame and all our blame. Yes, this one will do. Can we drink this cup?

Missing the Meaning

In the Gospel story when this question was first raised, James and John say they can drink this cup. But do they understand? Jesus had just told them of his destination and his destiny: Jerusalem and Calvary. We see the failure of the disciples so clearly here: after just being told that the destiny of discipleship is crucifixion, they ask for a promotion. At least, that is how the other disciples interpret the question. John and James want high places in the company. But in the company of disciples, in the company of true friends, there is no higher place. There is no one to wait on them for they are to wait on God as they serve each other. Though they have experienced leaders who lust for power, privilege and position, Jesus tells his disciples, "It cannot be that way with you" (Matt 20:26). Discipleship is not about self-promotion but self-denial—a demotion that places the other's need before one's own ambition.

In the context of our companionship at the table of Eucharist, we can drink this cup if we know that the contents are not an elixir that erases our wounds but rather causes us to experience them more deeply.



*Can we look into
the chalice red with wine
and see the reflection
of our lives
being poured out
in love for others?*

We can drink this cup if we know that in this chalice the Divine One we call messiah is mingled with the mayhem and the mangled promises of every person; the crushed hopes and shredded dreams of every generation.

We can drink this cup if we know that this cup holds the vintage wine of victory that causes courage to swell shrunken souls, passion to pulse through paralyzed limbs, and commitment to warm cold hands, hearts, and feet. We can drink this cup if we realize the

risks we take with a single sip: that we will become intoxicated with redemption. And once we are inebriated with eternity, we will take the lowest place, pick up the heaviest cross, endure the most grievous loss.

We can drink this cup if we know that in this company of companions there are no slaves, only friends. And in this company of friends, all are equal, all are one. We are one in our desire to look out for the other's interests. We are one in our desire to serve.

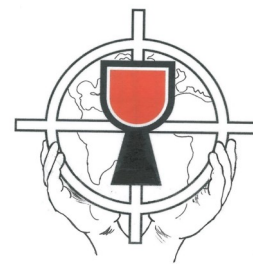
Can we drink this cup? Can we look into the chalice red with wine and see the reflection of our lives being poured out in love for others? Can we see not only our own faces but the faces of those with whom we stand and so seek to give others a glimpse of God's glory even amid the gloom of their lives? When we look into this cup, can we see the faces of the poor ones, the broken ones, the bruised and battered ones? This is the challenge of our companionship in the blood of Christ: to look into the chalice and see the reflection of who we are and who we might become when we live the memory of the cup we drink.

The Memory: Do This in Remembrance of Me

For many years I had a ceramic image of St. Gaspar hanging on the wall in my office. One autumn afternoon, a strong draft of wind slammed the door of my office causing the image of Gaspar to fall and to shatter on the concrete floor. When I picked up the pieces, the two largest pieces that remained intact were the face of the founder and the chalice he held in his hand.

When suffering slams the door on our lives and causes our images of God to shatter, Precious Blood spirituality reflects that these two images will remain: the face of God that is stained with tears because God knows what we suffer; and the hand of God holding a chalice to collect all the pain and suffering of the world into this cup. In this chalice God gathers the pain and suffering of the world into this cup. In this chalice God gathers the pain and suffering of every human being, lifts it up, and drinks it in.

"How well chosen wine was," the poet Luci Shaw writes, "to stain our souls with remembrance. A shocking red, unforgettable as blood, a rich brew in the cup, a bitter burning in the throat, a warmth within, chosen well to



Created by Trish Frazer, Companion

etch our lintels with the paradoxes of a high priest bound to his altar, death as a tool of love and blood as a bleach.”

This is the memory the cup holds: the death of Jesus is the “tool of love” that redeems the world. Through this Blood, the Blood that stains our memory, colors our conscience, gives us pause and cause to hope again, is the Blood of life.

Like that image of Gaspar holding the cup, we all have our images of God. Though these images are not a substitute for experiencing the real presence of God, our images help us to articulate how we have experienced the presence of God. We have these images, these pictures of God etched in our souls: a red sky at night might remind us of God’s real presence; the face of a child or of our beloved might illuminate for us the face of God; the shoulder of a friend when we are sad or broken-hearted might remind us of God’s shoulder that catches our tears; the laughter of companions whose company we keep might capture for us God’s joy. Though we have not seen God, we have seen glimpses of God’s presence in very real and affirming ways. These glimpses, these benevolent glances, are so important to sustain our faith in the Divine Presence.

But sometimes our images of God become too small, too specific, and too precise. Like that picture of our founder hanging on the wall that falls to the floor and cracks when a door slams or the earth trembles, our images of God are sometimes smashed when the ground beneath our feet quakes because of suffering we cannot explain and loss we can barely name. We try to pick up the pieces of our picture of God in these times of incredible tragedy, but our images are never quite the same.

We Do This in Memory of Jesus

While giving a retreat at a parish in Kansas City a few years ago, I spent a day visiting some of the contemplatives of the congregation—the people often referred to as “the shut-ins.” I met a husband and wife, Joe and Margaret, who have been married fifty-two years. Margaret was suffering from Alzheimer’s disease, the insidious disease that stole her memory. She could not remember her husband’s name. Margaret looked at Joe with a vacant stare. Joe cared for her with great compassion and love. I saw his tears as we prayed with Margaret and anointed her.



Afterwards, in the living room, I saw the picture taken on their 50th wedding anniversary before the disease began to take its toll. Their smiles told a story of commitment and gratitude. It is a picture that Joe obviously treasured. He remembered the good times even as he struggled through very difficult times. For on the other side of the wall where this picture hung, Margaret could not remember his name.

I met another woman, Theresa, about my age, who was a pediatric nurse. Theresa loved her work. Every day she held newborn children in her arms. Is there a more profound image of God, of life, than this? But in her late twenties she began to develop the symptoms of multiple sclerosis. Eventually she was confined to a bed, her body is frail and useless. She



cannot use those arms which once held countless children to feed herself now. The disease affected her speech. She can barely talk above a whisper. After we celebrated the anointing of the sick and she received communion, Theresa asked me, “Has God forgotten me?”

I tried to assure Theresa that God has not forgotten her. But what evidence did I have? What images of God did I possess to give such an assurance? I held her hand and she smiled. I knew she wasn’t expecting an answer. But it was a question she had to ask. And as we held hands in silence, I saw a beauty in her eyes I had not seen before because I was too distracted by the

image of this woman in her early forties who’s body betrayed her. Held in the sacredness of that moment, held in the gaze of her eyes, I knew that Theresa already had the answer to her question: God had not forgotten. God does not forget.

When I left Theresa’s room and walked back into the living room, I saw the pictures of Theresa before the illness began to make her body a hostage. How beautiful she was before this illness imprisoned her. How beautiful she is now, though her body is twisted and tortured. I saw the beauty in her eyes which reflects her faith. It won’t be the glamorous picture of Theresa I will remember but the picture of Theresa in that bed, stretched out upon her cross, that holds my attention and focuses my fragile faith. It is not a glamorous picture but a glorious picture of one woman’s faith shining through inexplicable suffering.

I heard in the echoes of Theresa’s question, “Has God forgotten me?” another question, raised by another whose body was twisted and tortured, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” And in both questions there is an image of God that in a strange yet sacred way gives me strength. At this last supper in the company of his friends, Jesus raised the cup of blessing and said, “Do this in memory of me.” When we take this cup that contains both the blessing and the suffering of our lives, we remember Jesus. But even more, through Jesus’ identification with the contents of this cup, “This is my blood,” God remember us.

The Mercy of God

When we are in situations of extreme suffering or intolerable loss, the question “Why” is an appropriate question. In asking the question, “Has God forgotten me?” Theresa was struggling to make some sense of her suffering. She had every right to ask the question. But her question wasn’t suggesting that God somehow caused this disease to infiltrate her body. Instead, like Jesus’ question on the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” which is, of course, the opening verse from Psalm 22, it was an anguished cry of affirmation that somehow, someway, God is present in the midst of suffering. When Jesus shouts those opening lines of Psalm 22 from the cross, he is capturing the truth of the entire psalm which reflects the passage from doubt and fear to faith and hope.

In raising the question, “Why have you forsaken me?” Jesus voices his affirmation in the ever present mercy of God. From a Precious Blood perspective, images of God that are too small, too human, too narrow, too limited, too controlled by divine cause and effect are false images that can restrict our understanding and acceptance of God’s mercy. These images can be dangerous and destructive as the false idols our ancestors in faith constructed in the desert

*God
does
not
forget.*

on their journey to the promised land. Precious Blood spirituality suggests that we replace those images of God with ones that will strengthen not sever our faith in God when suffering threatens to fray the sacred connection. In the image of a tear-stained face of God who holds a cup in the divine hand, the mercy of God mingles with our own memory of what Jesus did on the night he was betrayed. Remember what Jesus said when he invited the disciples to drink from the cup: “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” That phrase, “for many,” implies that Jesus, instead of drawing in the boundaries of God’s love, expands them even more by moving to the margins where the poor, the unclean, the sinful make their home.

In the words of a poet, Christine Lore Weber, “All prayer ultimately hollows our lives into a cup to collect the blood of a torn world and transform it into the wine of Justice.” This is what Jesus did that night he was betrayed; this is what he does for us each time we drink from the cup: he hollows out our lives so that we can hold all the blood shed in anger and violence, murder and mayhem in the chalice of our hearts. This blood poured out for all, calls us to become vessels of blessing, containers of compassion, receptacles of redemption for all the world.

Because we have the courage to drink from this cup which holds God’s mercy, we believe this choice wine will fill our hollow lives with the Blood of Christ and cause this chalice of our hearts to overflow with love. As Rumi, the Sufi poet, prophet, and mystic wrote, “When grapes turn to wine, they long for our ability to change,” so when we drink of this cup, like grapes that become wine, like wine that becomes blood, God calls forth from us our willingness to be changed. This blood, precious and bold, merciful and memorable, pulses with passion from our hearts and races through our veins to bring us life and liberation.

*This blood poured out for all,
calls us to become
vessels of blessing,
containers of compassion,
receptacles of redemption
for all the world.*



For Reflection and Discussion...

Fr. Nassal states that those who aspire to live as Companions of the Blood of Christ face the question: “Can you drink this cup?” How do you respond?

Prayer of the Chalice from the Sufi Tradition

O Divine One,
to Thee I raise my whole being,
a vessel emptied of self.
Accept, O gracious God,
this my emptiness,
and so fill me with Thyself—
Thy Light, Thy Love, Thy Life—
that these Thy precious Gifts
may radiate through me
and overflow the chalice
of my heart
into the hearts of all with whom
I come in contact this day—
revealing unto them the beauty
of Thy Joy and Wholeness
and the serenity of Thy peace
which nothing can destroy.

Meditation 3

Bringing All People Near

A Spirituality of the Cross
by Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S

Precious Blood people have their eyes fixed on the cross of Jesus Christ. We find our footing at the foot of the cross. In this chapter we will explore how the spirituality of the cross reflects God's desires to bring all peoples near through the Blood of Christ. We will examine the crosses we carry in our own lives and try to see them as invitations to a holy communion with a God who suffers with us and a planet so often plagued with pain. The spirituality of the cross engages our memory by asking us to recall how God chose to stand with us in the person of Jesus. When we stand at the foot of the cross, we do not stand alone.

At the Foot of the Cross: Holy Ground

*When we stand
at the foot
of the cross,
we do not stand alone.*

Like long-distance runners about to embark on this cross-country course, the first thing we do is to check our feet.

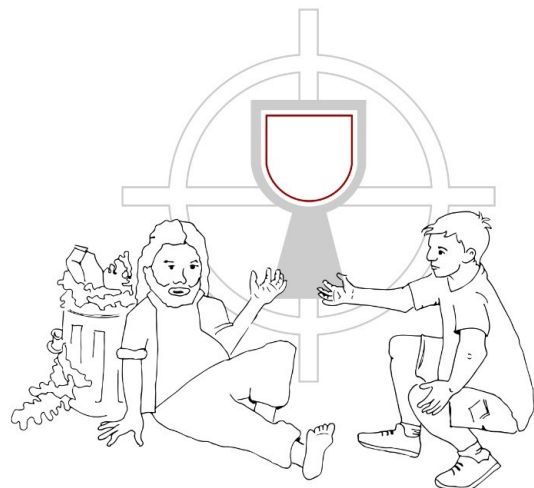
On a retreat several years ago, a priest told me about one of his first assignments in the inner city of Chicago. The neighborhood bore the scars of urban blight and decay. He went to the grocery store one day, walking over countless broken bottles on the sidewalks and streets. As he stood at the check-out line, a young boy from the parish greeted him. The priest noticed that the youngster wasn't wearing any shoes. Bob asked him where his shoes were. The boy said, "At home." He told the priest that he preferred to walk barefoot. "Of course, my feet get bloody sometimes because I step on broken glass." The priest summed up the story by saying, "I want to go to heaven with my shoes off."

In a sense, this is what Precious Blood people do: we walk through the streets with no shoes. Nothing between our feet and the ground. With bloody feet from broken glass and broken dreams, we find ourselves standing on holy ground. The spirituality of the cross suggests we stand where the blood of the poor, the accused, the condemned has seeped into the soil beneath our feet. This is holy ground.

In a sense, this is what Precious Blood people do: we walk through the streets with no shoes. Nothing between our feet and the ground. With bloody feet from broken glass and broken dreams, we find ourselves standing on holy ground. The spirituality of the cross suggests we stand where the blood of the poor, the accused, the condemned has seeped into the soil beneath our feet. This is holy ground.

When we stand with others under the weight of their crosses, we stand in the same place Jesus did. It is a place of condemnation, accusation, and rejection. It is a place that resembles a lonely hill outside the city of Jerusalem where tears are shed and hopes are shattered. This is the place where we will hear the call of companionship.

Where do we stand? Too often we answer that question from the standpoint of ideology: we say we are liberal or conservative, progressive or traditional. But as Companions of the Blood of Christ, we answer that question not from the viewpoint of ideology but from the vantage point of our spirituality. When we stand close to the cross, we will see that the water and the blood flow like a



Created by Trish Frazer, Companion

stream from the side of Jesus make us a community. In this water and blood, we are washed and redeemed: “It is in Christ and through his Blood that we have been redeemed and our sins forgiven” (Eph 1:7). In water and in blood, we are brought near: “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near through the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13). It is the power of this water and blood flowing from the cross of Christ “who is our peace,” that breaks “down the barrier of hostility that kept us apart” (Eph 2:14).

In the water and in the blood that soaks the holy ground on which we stand, we find “peace through the Blood of his cross” (Col 1:20).

Cross Examination

Those who have stood under the weight of cross; those who view the world from the perspective of Precious Blood spirituality, know the meaning of that phrase from the Apostle’s Creed when we say, “Christ descended into hell.” They know because they’ve been there too. They have the scars on their souls, the wounds on their hearts, and the ashes on their psyches to prove it. But this has taught them to keep seeking, in Paul’s words to “know Christ and the power flowing from his resurrection; likewise to know how to share in his sufferings by being formed into the pattern of his death” (Phil 3:10).

People who are prepared to be “cross examined” for their faith “give no thought to what lies behind but push on to what is ahead” (Phil 3:13). Like Paul their “entire attention is on the finish line” (Phil 3:14). They see the cross not as a hurdle on this racetrack of redemption but rather as the way one must follow in order to reach the finish line.

This is the call to companionship captured in the cross of Jesus. As Companions, we walk together not knowing exactly where the finish line is. Remember what Paul writes, “It is not that I have already finished my course; but I am racing to grasp the prize if possible” (Phil 3:14). We run this race, we pursue this prize, when we have the courage to examine those crosses of our own lives. We run this race, we pursue this prize when we are crushed by the crosses of our lives but have the courage to get back up again and continue on this cross country course. And we pursue this prize when we stop along the way to stand with another in his or her pain and suffering.



St. Gaspar's mission cross
in the museum at Albano.
cpps-preciousblood.org/gallery

The Obstruction of the Cross

For many of us, however, when we follow this way of the cross we sense this central symbol of our faith not as an opportunity or an invitation but rather as an obstacle, as something we want to avoid. Most of the time many of us view the cross not in terms of triumph but in terms of tragedy.

A few years ago on September 14, the feast of the Triumph of the Cross, we placed a large cross between the altar and the congregation. Preaching that day, I had to look through the cross to see the people. The cross was in the way. We placed the cross in the most visible place we could find. We could not deny its

presence, just as we can't deny the presence of those crosses in our own lives.

Or can we? We can move the cross off to the side. We can stand it against the wall. We can get it out of the way of our worship. Isn't that what we often do with the cross in our lives: we move the cross out of our way. We hang the cross on the walls so that no one will trip or stumble or fall. We place it on steeples that rise toward the skies, putting the cross out of our reach.

In most places where I preach, I have my back to the cross. But for that one Sunday morning, the cross was in the way. Whatever I said that day had to pass first through the cross. Which is, of course, the point and the paradox of the cross. When the cross is in the center of our lives, it is more than a distraction, it is an obstruction. The cross we placed at the center of our worship obstructed our view — my view of the congregation, their view of me and of the altar.

The cross was in the way. But isn't that how we often view the cross in our lives: not so much as the way of the cross, but the cross as in the way? Don't the crosses of our lives weigh us down rather than lift us up? Don't we claim our crosses as tragedies not triumphs?

The Language of the Cross

Think about how we speak of those crosses we carry. Don't we often talk about them in the language of loss? When we suffer a setback, or are engaged in a struggle, or endure a relationship that is difficult, we say of the experience, the event, the person, "I guess it is a cross I have to bear." We speak of it as something — or someone — that tries our patience. Sometimes a heavy cross, an incredible loss, weighs us down, pushes us to the ground.

Reflect for a moment on how we use the word "cross" in our language. A parent says to a child after the child talks back: "Don't get cross with me." A boss comes into work in a foul mood and the whispers in the office warn: "He's cross today." Or, "Better not cross him."

We use the word when there's a mix-up of communication: "She crossed me up." Or, "Our letters must have crossed in the mail." We use it to write people off; "I crossed her name off the list." In some relationships with people, the cross is multiplied: the familiar double-cross.

In body language, we cross our arms, cross our legs, cross ourselves, and each gesture conveys a certain meaning: distance, a lack of interest, a defensive posture, a blessing, or the beginning of a prayer.

We cross the street to get to the other side. We come upon a hill with a yellow sign that has a black cross in the center and we slow down because just over the hill there's a cross road. And we don't want to cross paths with an oncoming car to cause a crash.

We cross stitch, cross examine, cross over, cross country. There are cross winds, cross beams, cross walks, cross words. It's puzzling.

Have I crossed you up? Or is it down?



The Direction of the Cross

According to Paul's famous hymn in his letter to the Philippians (2:5-11), the movement of the cross is both up and down. That's the direction of the cross. It takes us higher and deeper. But it also takes us to the east and to the west. In the darkness of our night, we look to the northern skies and see the northern cross; turn to the south and see the southern cross. This is what the cross does: it points to the north, pushes us to the south.

*The
cross
is
the
way.*

This is the direction of the cross; it is the way that leads to life. This sense of direction is captured in the Philippians hymn which portrays a downward movement as Jesus did not claim equality with God as something to be exploited but rather emptied himself, taking the form of a slave. God came down to earth. Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross. But because of this downward movement of the Divine One, “God highly exalted him.”

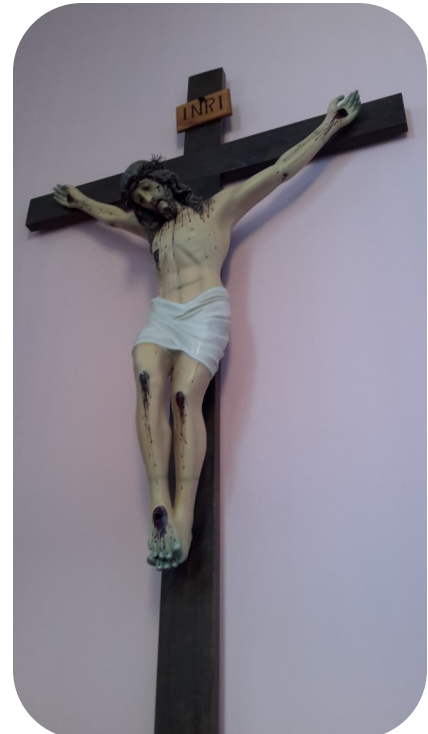
The cross goes both ways. The cross goes all ways. The cross is the way. Except for many of us in the language of our lives, the cross is too often in the way.

Looking at the Cross

When we look at our own lives and see the crosses we've carried, the experiences of suffering we've endured, and maybe even the people we've encountered whose personalities or ideologies have tried our patience, we begin to sense how these crosses have allowed us to go deeper into the mystery of suffering, the mystery of life. We look at those experiences of how we survived not by our own strength or talent or gifts, but because of an inner strength we never knew we had until our world came crashing in and the cross grew so large we thought we'd be crushed under its weight. We often say in moments like these: “I never would have made it through without my faith.”

This is the quality of redemptive suffering that is traced upon the cross. Redemptive suffering brings people together; it does not divide. A powerful example of this occurred a few years ago when a frail, fragile little woman in India, Mother Teresa, died. There was an extraordinary outpouring of emotion from all parts of the world upon learning of her death. At her funeral, the true measure of what it means to be Catholic was in evidence as people from all faith traditions gathered to pay their respects and voiced prayers of gratitude to this small woman who carried large crosses. It was her ability to see the tragic consequences of the cross — the poverty, the homeless, the hungry, the leprosy — and her ability to respond in faith that the world regarded her life as a triumph. Mother Teresa claimed the cross as her triumph and this was seen clearly at her funeral as national boundaries and religious barriers were crossed in paying tribute to a woman who consistently refused to be labeled as a saint and instead clung to the words, “as I have done, so you must do.”

As Mother Teresa had done, so we can do. Unfortunately for most of us, we are content to make people like



Located at St. Charles Center,
Carthagen, Ohio

Mother Teresa saints and let ourselves off the hook. But when we don't look away and see the cross for what it is, we see it is our life. As painful as our lives are at times, there is the ultimate promise being spoken through this cross. As difficult as it is to bear at times, this cross will lift us free. As tragic as our lives become at times, God's faith in us, God's love for us, God's hope in us, makes it possible to claim our little lives as a triumph of the cross.

Conversation with the Cross

When we place the cross at the center of our lives, we begin to understand that life is not about comparing losses — as when we hear about people whose crosses are so large that ours seem to shrink into insignificance. No, it is not making comparisons but making conversation with our own crosses. It's about feeling the weight of our own crosses, measuring the depth of our own losses, and beginning to see them not as obstructions but as opportunities for God's ultimate triumph in our lives. For when we are in the depths, we cannot rely on our own resources. We can rely only on the One whose grace comes down from heaven and lifts us up again.

When we are emptied by the suffering we have endured, we can only rely on the redemption won for us on the cross to fill us with hope again. When we are weighed down by tragedy, it is the cross that is etched upon our lives at baptism that claims us for Christ. With this gift of faith growing in our hearts, we claim our cross-laden, blood-stained lives as a triumph of hope.

When we heed the conversation of this cross, we hear the wisdom of the wood — a wisdom the world deems as foolish. These planks of wood, once living, are cut down and tied together to hold the body of another living being. From this wood, the voice of the dying gives

life to the living. From this wood, the suffering of the innocent gives forgiveness to the guilty. From this wood, the blood of the Lamb gives courage to the lost. From this wood, the compassion of the crucified gives comfort to the grieving.

At times in our lives this conversation with the cross is given voice in the witness of someone who knows the language of the cross. A friend of mind was very ill from cancer. For almost two years, Nancy had to receive weekly intravenous treatments. Somewhere in the middle of this exhausting process to restore her health. Nancy lost her courage. She wanted to run from the tree of the cross for she found no shade, no comfort. In describing this experience, she wrote

*As painful as our lives
are at times,
there is the
ultimate promise
being spoken through
this cross.*



“It is hard to say which collapsed first, my soul or my veins, but collapse they both did. One day the search for a healthy vein became too painful. I pushed the needle away and cried.”

In telling this story, Nancy recalls that the nurse left the room but returned a short while later holding the hand of a little girl. This ten-year-old girl had battled cancer for most of her life. The child smiled at Nancy and said, “You should have got one of these.” Lifting her T-shirt, she showed Nancy the hole that had been cut into her abdomen so that she could receive her treatments through a permanent plastic port. Then this little girl put her hand, so small and so soft, on Nancy's hand and said, “You can take it.” And Nancy did.

Through her own suffering, under the shade of her own cross, this little girl smiled. And in her smile and in the touch of her hand, Nancy found the courage to rest awhile longer under the shade of her own cross.

The little girl's words to Nancy, “You can take it,” reflects Jesus' invitation to his disciples: “Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny one's very self, take up one's cross each day, and follow in my steps” (Luke 9:23). There was a certain sense of authority in the little girl's words because of the suffering she had known in the ten short years of her life.

When someone comes to me when I am sitting under the tree of the cross and says, “I know what you're going through, my first reaction is, “How dare you! How can you possibly know what I'm going through? How can you possibly know my suffering or my pain?” But when that person shows me his or her wounds, as the little girl showed Nancy, when I know a little of the story of what the other has suffered, I find the invitation to sit for a spell with the other under the shade of the tree of the cross. And I find, as Nancy did, that I can take it. I can take up this cross and follow. I can find the courage to go on.

This is what Jesus is saying to us: “I know what you're going through.” And when God knows what we're going through, we can find the courage to continue.

Brought Near through the Blood of the Cross

The spirituality of the cross reminds us how we find our home as people of faith, as children of promise, as companions in the Blood of Christ in the broken heart of God. It is here where every suffering and every death; where every torture and every terror; where every pain and every passion of every human being comes together at the same sacred place: in the broken heart of God.

We stand close together at the foot of the cross. This One who hangs from the wood of the cross draws us near. We stand at the cross and listen to the wisdom of the wood: we are not alone. Our suffering is united with the very suffering of God. Our pain is etched in the grains of this wood. Our death dares to be incorporated into the death of Jesus.

In coming together, in walking this way of the cross, in standing close to each other at the foot of the cross, we find a soul mate for our suffering; a companion for our journey to death; and savior for ourselves and our world.

“Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny one's very self, take up one's cross each day, and follow in my steps” (Luke 9:23).

For Reflection and Discussion...

When have you experienced a triumph of a cross experiencing the new life offered in suffering? How does this experience inform your outlook on loss?

Canticle of the Blood of Christ



preciousbloodspirituality.org/gallery

Come, let us adore Christ, the Son of God,
who has redeemed us with his blood.

O God, my God, what can I render to you
for all the good you have bestowed upon me?

Clap your hands, all you people,
Sing unto God with a voice of jubilation.

I will take the chalice of salvation,
and I will call upon the power of Christ's
blood.

For you, God, glorious and mighty,
have shown us mercy.

Sing to Jesus, all you saints
and make known the memory of his holiness.

You have not spared your only Son
but have delivered him up in our behalf.

For Christ indeed has loved us
and washed us in his blood
and has become our helper and redeemer.

That you might redeem us from our sins
in Christ's own blood;

May Christ be blessed forever
who has wrought such wonders in us.

That justified in the blood of Jesus
you might turn your anger from us;

Blessed be Jesus for all ages,
and may the heavens and the earth be filled
with the praises of his love.

That we who were separated
might be reconciled through the
blood of Christ.

Come, let us adore Christ, the Son of God,
who has redeemed us with his blood.

Meditation 4

From Genesis to Revelations

A Spirituality of Covenant

by Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S



Covenant Rite in Florida

Companionship in the Congregation of the Precious Blood is about making covenant. In this chapter, we will explore the nature of our covenantal relationship with God and with one another by reflecting on the covenant God made with our ancestors in faith as it is

expressed in the Hebrew and Christian Testaments. We will trace some of the key moments and rituals that reflect our understanding of covenant that was initiated by God; broken by infidelity; reclaimed through the voices of the prophets; and made new, signed, sealed and delivered in the Blood of Christ.

Early Signs of Covenant

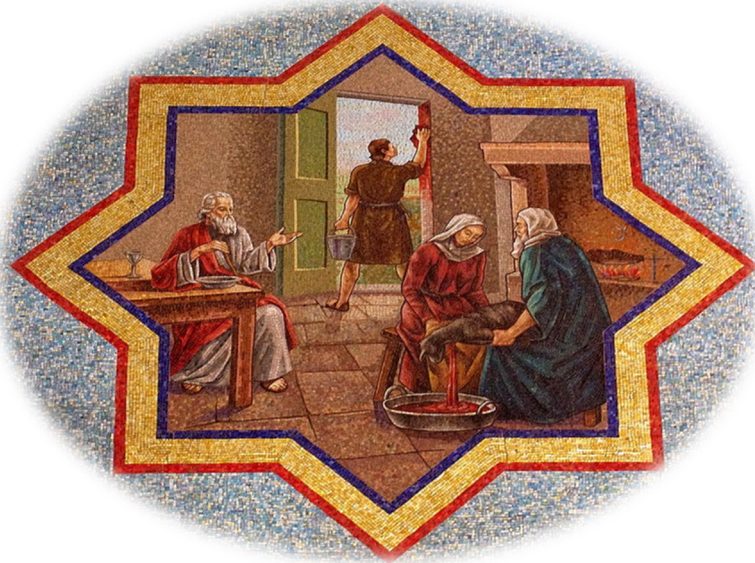
In the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, God says, “It is not good for the human to be alone.” So God decides to live in each one of us and in all of creation, thereby insuring an experience of community for as long as God lives. God’s breath in the form of a mighty wind separated the land from the sea. God’s breath in the form of a gentle kiss brought life to the human. The story says we carry with us the very spirit of God. We are God’s beloved from the beginning of creation.

But we know what happens next. The time of transition begins when Adam and Eve are not content with who they are in relationship with God; they want to be God. Because of their breach of covenant, they are escorted to a new home outside the garden of Eden. We’ve been trying to make our way back to Eden ever since.

Certain mile markers in journey back to the Garden of Eden are worth noting. For example the story of Noah and his crew of ancient mariners is the first evidence of the covenant God makes with the people. The sign of the covenant is seen in a rainbow creasing the stormy sky. I promise, God says, I will never seek to destroy the earth again. The covenant is signed and tied with a bow.

Later, God chooses Abraham and Sarah, the couple with no children and seemingly no future, to reconnect with a community of believers. With Abraham and Sarah, God once again writes the divine signature reflecting the promise of the covenant in the sky, this time in the stars. But God also authorized the writing of the covenant on the body. Circumcision became a sign of the covenantal relationship with God. Abraham's story suggest that God’s covenant is so personal and intimate, it is engraved on one’s body. (As we know, this ritual expression of the covenant became a source of conflict much later after Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant

Made new, signed, sealed and delivered in the blood of Christ.



Artist: Nheyob

time to try again. This time God chooses a shepherd with a charismatic personality, a hot temper, and latent leadership skills. Moses will lead the people out of Egypt on a desert sojourn toward the promised land.

The Exodus stories give us a new way in which God signs the covenant with the people. In both the Passover story when the homes of the chosen ones were marked with the blood of lambs to signify their special relationship with God; and later, in the messy ritual of Moses sprinkling half of the blood of slaughtered animals on the altar and sprinkling the people with the other half, the covenant is now signed in blood. Because blood is the life force within us, this symbol becomes for the people the sign of their freedom from their oppressors and the favor they enjoy in God's eyes. They are God's people; they share the bloodlines that make them a new family of faith.

Because these two stories from Exodus are so central to our understanding of covenant in the context of Precious Blood spirituality, we pause our journey back to Eden by remembering these stories in more detail.

A Passover Ritual and A Sprinkling Rite

In the story of the Passover from Exodus, God advises Moses to tell the people to observe this ritual as a "perpetual ordinance" (Exodus 12:14). This story of the first Passover shapes and sustains our understanding of Precious Blood spirituality. The Israelites are huddled in their houses. The space is crowded with family and friends who have been told not to spend this night alone. In this crowded space, standing shoulder to shoulder, our ancestors in faith make it through this night of danger and destruction because of the blood that stains the doorposts of their houses. This blood becomes the sign of their deliverance from the death and destruction that whirls about their houses that night. This blood becomes the symbol of their liberation to live God's new dream and new identity for them. They are no longer slaves in a strange land, but pilgrims who would soon be on the move to a promised land. But in their moving, God advises them,

*This blood
becomes
the symbol of
their liberation
to live
God's new dream
and new identity
for them.*

and then ascended into heaven. The early Christian community got into the famous family feud regarding whether or not the new converts had to be circumcised.)

After a series of breakdowns on the part of the people in living the covenant that God made with Abraham and Sarah, and breakups in the covenantal relationship that must have caused God a few sleepless nights and more than a few heavy sighs. God hears the screams of a certain group of slaves and decides it's

do not forget this night. Do not forget this story. That is why they are to celebrate this ritual as a “perpetual ordinance.”

In the second story from Exodus we read: “Moses took half of the blood and put it in large bowls” (Exodus 24:6). These are the containers that hold the blood of the covenant. In this remarkable ritual, Moses takes half the blood and splashes it on the altar. Then, after the people have heard the Word of God and reply, “All that God has said we will heed and do,” Moses sprinkles the people with the blood from the bowls. This sprinkling rite seals the covenant which God has made with the people.

This is the blood that stains the people with an identity: they are God’s people. These large bowls of blood hold the sign of life, the symbol of relationship. In the action of the ritual, the people are invited to believe that they are now in a unique and holy relationship with their Creator, a relationship sealed by a sacred bond that is stronger than death. Now they are God’s special people and are to live in a new way because of the love God has shared with them. The people themselves become the containers of God’s compassion; the vessels which hold this life force captured in this “blood of the covenant.”

But this unique and intimate relationship with God becomes too much for the people. The desert is too much for them. Even freedom becomes too much for them. On their long trek across the desert, they begin to lose hope and lose touch with God. This should not surprise us. When the people are out in the desert, there is no place to hide. Since there is no security, they have to rely completely on God. They complain to Moses that even though they were in slavery in Egypt, at least they had enough to eat. Again, this is a natural reaction since to be freed from slavery is frightening. They had become familiar with what to expect as an oppressed people. Now this sense of freedom they are experiencing is something completely new. They have to become entirely new people!

*Written
with
the
finger
of
God.*

Again they complain to Moses, Moses meets with God to discern the next step in this evolving relationship. At times, God gets frustrated and threatens to destroy these complaining nomadic children. But Moses intervenes and convinces God to give them just a little more time. After all, what would God look like in the eyes of the Egyptians if God led the people out of slavery with signs and wonders only to destroy them in the desert? God’s reputation is at stake here. So God gives in to Moses and puts the covenant down in writing, on tablets, etched in stone, “written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18).

Prophets: The New Covenant

After the people reach the promised land and settle down for awhile, their “favored nation status” becomes too much for them. They want to be like all the other nations. They want a king. They want a temple instead of a tent in which to worship their God. Again they are forsaking the covenant which is based on the principle that God alone is their ruler. But once again God gives in to their demands.

In wanting to be like all the other nations; in denying their special place in God’s heart, they lose sight of original vision of the covenant. They lose their land and become exiles once again. In their most dire and desperate predicament, the prophets come along to call the people back to covenantal relationship.

What is important for us to remember here is that prophets don’t create community so

much as remember community by remembering the covenant. Prophets seek to transform the community to which they belong by drawing upon ancient sources, stories, and symbols that recapture for the people their unique relationship with God.

*“And these words
which I command
you this day shall be
upon your heart”*

One of these prophets, Jeremiah, introduces the concept of the new covenant that is no longer written on tablets or carved in stone but is now etched upon the heart of the people (Jeremiah 31). But the newness of this covenant is actually imbedded in the very old idea outlined in Deuteronomy, chapter 6, when Moses outlines the first covenant to the people. Namely, “You shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart” (verse 5).

That passage from Deuteronomy which Jeremiah resurrects refreshes the peoples’ memory. The words of the covenant are to be taught to the children; are to be talked about in the homes; are to be the subject of conversation as they walk along the way; are to be the first words they think about when they get up in the morning and the last words they remember as they go to sleep at night. “And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand; and you shall write them on the doorpost of your house and on your gates” (Deut. 6:8-9). Again, the implication of this passage is that the covenantal relationship between God and the people is so personal, so intimate, that the words of the covenant are written on the palms of their hands, splashed on their front porches and the gates of their homes.

Jeremiah traces the divine initiative and inspiration of the Mosaic covenant that God chooses a particular people to be God’s very own. The prophet reminds the people that this covenant must now be written not on the body but in the body: on one’s heart.

The Spacious Vision: A New Covenant in the Blood of Christ

Jesus takes this notion of the new covenant that is written upon one’s heart and draws upon the symbolism of the story about the blood of lambs splashed on porches to identify himself as the Lamb of God whose blood ushers in a new age of relationship with God. He remembers and reverences the story of the first covenant even as he creates this new covenant that is signed in his own blood.

The spaciousness of this covenant is reflected in the story of Jesus’ own Passover. On that day before he died, Jesus advises his disciples to go into town to prepare a place for the Passover meal they would celebrate that night. The disciples are shown an “upstairs room, spacious, furnished, and all in order.” Notice, that this room is “spacious.” Unlike the crowded houses of the Israelites on the first night of Passover, Jesus would celebrate his Passover in a spacious room, furnished, and all in order. Even as the chaos of his own death and destruction is lurking in the shadows of that very night,



preciousbloodspirituality.org/gallery

Jesus finds a room that is spacious. Jesus, the high priest, enters this spacious sanctuary not with the kind of blood his ancestors used to sprinkle the doorpost of their crowded houses, but with his own blood.

How spacious is this room? Consider the fact that Jesus enters this sanctuary where a new covenant is born, a new creation is conceived, in the company of his friends, one of whom would betray him, another of whom would later that night deny even knowing him. Like his ancestors, this Blood of Christ will become the means of deliverance from all that seeks to destroy humanity. Whatever sin seeks to keep people apart, whatever betrayals and denials threaten to constrict peoples' hearts, the Blood of Christ becomes the means of liberation to live God's new dreams.

*...the Blood of Christ becomes the means
of liberation to live God's new dreams.*

The spirituality of covenant in the Blood of Christ offers a spacious vision where all are welcome, where all find a place at the table, where all find room to breathe, to move, and to be truly human and holy. As Companions in the Blood of Christ, we seek to create a community that resembles that upper room where Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples. We fill this house with rituals that celebrate our identity as blood brothers and sisters: we break bread, pour wine, wash feet, dream peace. This house of the new covenant is furnished with forgiveness for those who may betray or deny us and our dreams, or are fearful of trusting in God's dream for them. In this spacious, inclusive house, there is room for all.

The spaciousness of this sacred challenge is summed up by Jesus in his new commandment: "This I command you, to love one another" (John 15:17). Our relationship with God, our friendship with Jesus, and our companionship with one another is grounded in this commandment to be inclusive: to love one another. This simple command reflects the biblical notion of covenant. It is at the center of our understanding of what it means to be Companions of the Precious Blood.

An Inclusive Community: God Shows No Partiality

Precious blood spirituality is about becoming new — new community, new covenant, new creation. The primary symptoms of the Spirit who makes all things new is that a people of faith pays attention to those who are outside the boundaries of community life.

The spirituality of covenant in the Blood of Christ is inclusive: we are to be an inclusive community of memory and hope. We are open to all peoples, all faith traditions, all ways of life, orientations, political and ecclesial views, and economic circumstances. Through the resurrection of Jesus, the world was given a new lease on life. This new life, this new covenant is characterized especially by concern for those who are outside the walls of our "uncommon" life.



Precious Blood community participates in a reconciliation service at St. Gaspar Church in Rome, Italy during the bicentennial pilgrimage.
cpps-preciousblood.org/gallery

One of the primary stories in Scriptures that reflects this experience is the story of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-11, 18). The conversion of Cornelius signals the beginning of a new era. Cornelius is at prayer when he receives a vision. He instructs two of his servants to go to Peter who is staying with Simon the tanner. By profession, Simon was considered an outcast. Already, then, the inclusivity of the new covenant is seen in Peter as he follows what Jesus would have done: stayed at the home of an outcast.

As the story unfolds, Peter is praying on the roof of the house. His stomach growling with hunger, Peter receives a vision of something like a picnic blanket descending from heaven that is filled with all kinds of non-kosher food. Because of his religious beliefs, Peter says he will not eat this “common” food. But he hears a voice that says, “What God has cleansed, you must not call common.” The Scripture says that Peter was “inwardly perplexed as to what the vision which he had seen might mean.”

Later, when Peter arrives at the home of Cornelius, he says, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit any one of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone common or unclean.” This is a major breakthrough in Peter’s thinking. He moves from the precepts of the law to the person, focusing his attention on Cornelius and the people who have gathered in his home.

Cornelius shares his vision with Peter as to why he sent for him. And then Peter says, “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God.” Then Peter goes on to tell the story of Jesus and while he was speaking, “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.”

This is the vision that guides the Companion process in the Congregation of the Precious Blood: “God shows no partiality.” To paraphrase something that Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote by placing it in the context of our companionship in the Blood of Christ, we might say that “to be a Companion does not mean following a certain set of rules but to be the person that the Blood of Christ creates in us.”

By making covenant with the Congregation, we acknowledge and affirm the person that the Blood of Christ is creating within us. By living this covenant that is signed, sealed, and delivered in the Blood of Christ, we call others to the inclusive and expansive covenant of relationship that is found in the Blood of Christ.



As people who have washed our robes, our hopes, our dreams in the blood of the Lamb, we embrace this image of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world — all that seeks to divide us or keep us separate from one another. Jesus, who spent his life looking for and searching out those who were lost, so identifies with the lost sheep of the flock that he becomes the lamb. He is the lamb led to the slaughter. He is the lamb silent before his shearers. The final stage of our journey back to Eden occurs in the book of Revelation when Jesus is seen as the lamb of God who sits in judgment as peoples of all tribes and nations, races, and creeds, orientations and ways of life, come before the Lamb who was slain. Here in this place, in this holy city without walls of limits, everyone finds a place at the table, a place to call home.

For Reflection and Discussion...

Fr. Joe Nassal writes, “The spirituality of covenant in the Blood of Christ is inclusive: we are to be an inclusive community of memory and hope. We are open to all peoples, all faith traditions, all ways of life, orientations, political and ecclesial views, and economic circumstances...especially...those who are outside the walls.” Bring to mind times when you have found it difficult to be inclusive, when you have found the Precious Blood invitation to care for all very difficult to live out. Recall when Precious Blood spirituality has helped you see others with new eyes and accept them in your circle.

Name ways that that you have been enriched by exercising the virtue of inclusivity.

Meditation on the Cup

by Alan Hartway, C.P.P.S.

The Cup of Salvation

“What gift can ever repay God’s gift to me? I raise the cup of salvation as I call on God’s name!” (Ps 116:13).

Out of darkness into light, from slavery to freedom, we share with you, our God, at the altar, a cup of liberation when you bring us into community life and call us to the apostolate.

“I am competent of doing nothing more than to pray, to be silent and to suffer. Let us always keep in contact with each other through the wounds of Jesus Christ” (St. Gaspar).

The Cup that makes us Reel

“Awake, awake! Arise, O Jerusalem, you who drank at the Lord’s hand the cup of God’s wrath; who drained to the dregs the bowl of staggering” (Is 51:17).

With the poor and marginalized, with victims of war and violence, with immigrants and those on death row, we commit ourselves to sharing their cup. We trust that you have not rejected any of us, and it is you who work with us.

“May the divine blood be for us the fountain of ample blessings and you, through this devotion, have reason to be consoled” (St. Gaspar).

The Cup of Discipleship

“Jesus said to them, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?’ They said to him, ‘We can’” (Mk10:38).

In our youthful eagerness and enthusiasm, we have made many commitments often without knowing the consequences. Stir up within us the waters of our baptism and give us a share in the charism of Gaspar, Maria, Theresa, Maria, Ann, and Francis so that we might be in our time your faithful disciples.

“Let us remain in the wounds of Jesus Christ, our only mansion, and let us not lose courage” (St. Gaspar).

“Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for the forgiveness of sins’” (Mt 26:27).



Crafted by John Wolf, C.P.P.S.
Precious Blood Center
Liberty, MO

We share this cup when we gather at your Eucharistic table. May this blood create among us a new covenant and bind us in charity and enable us to practice reconciliation.

“Do everything, indeed, with a peaceful spirit, not becoming excited or agitated. God is a God of peace” (St. Gaspar).

The Cup of Blessing

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?”
(1 Cor 10:16)

You have blessed our community with every good thing. We ask you to continue to bless us as we learn to share this cup with an ever wider circle of people until all the walls have come down, those far are brought near, and your good news reaches the ends of the earth.

“Let us praise God who makes use of the weakest instruments for the great words of God’s glory” (St. Gaspar).

The Cup of Creation

“You make plants grow for people, food to eat from the earth and wine to warm the heart, oil to glisten on faces, and bread for bodily strength” (PS 104:14-15).

Creator God, everything you made is good. As we eat our meals together in the lineage of Gaspar, Maria, Theresa, Maria Anna, and Francis warm our hearts and lift our spirits. Let us delight in our bodies as well as our minds and souls, and take joy in this incarnate world. Let us be signs of joy and laughter in a world of despair and confusion.

“The glory of God is the main purpose for this holy union that must be set up in the wounds of Jesus Christ” (St. Gaspar).

The Cup of Inheritance

“O Lord, my allotted portion and my cup, you it is who hold fast my lot” (Ps 16:5).

We have inherited the charism and spirituality of the Precious Blood. Together we share the cup of life. Keep us firm in commitment, build us up, and give us a thousand tongues to proclaim the glory of the Blood of Christ.

“Let us give thanks to God for the good achieved and the fruits of the missions. To God be honor and glory! It is God who makes us fit for the ministry” (St. Gaspar).



cpps.preciousblood.org

The Cup of the New Creation

“For I tell you, from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the reign of God” (Mt 26:29).

When we drink this cup, let us always remember the peace and justice we yearn for and which we cannot bring about without you, Jesus. Let us commit ourselves to working together for the coming of that time when love will reign and all will be seated at the table of the Lamb.

“In the meantime, be an apostle, and especially encourage the devotion to the Divine Blood” (St. Gaspar).

St. Gaspar’s quotes from *Strokes of the Pen* by Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S., in the *Precious Blood Resource Series*.



Members and Companions celebrating the bicentennial in Rome.
cpps-preciousblood.org/gallery

Meditation 5

St. Gaspar

The Man, The Mission, The Dream
by Joseph Nassal, C.PP.S. and Ray Cera, C.PP.S



Companion on statue of
St. Gaspar in Giano, Italy
during the
bicentennial pilgrimage.

God has a dream for each of us. Sometimes our dreams are small, touching only our families and a few close friends. At other times they grow larger than life itself, stretching beyond our imaginations to touch countless generations who come after us. Such was the dream God had for one man, Gaspar del Bufalo, founder of Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

The seeds of such dreams are sown in our hearts by our parents, grandparents, and ancestors who have inspired us by their lives of faith and loving service. Certainly the same can be said for the parents of St. Gaspar.

His father, Antonio del Bufalo, was a servant in the family of a prince. He was a pious man of firm faith who was a staunch defender of the Holy Father. Gaspar's mother, Annunziata Quartieroni, was one of those quiet and saintly women who seemed to model her life and faith after the holy women of Scripture. She realized early in Gaspar's life that God had great things in store for him. She regularly inspired him with readings from the sacred Scriptures, especially passages from the passion of Christ readying the soil for God to plant within Gaspar a deep and abiding devotion to the Precious Blood.

The Man

Gaspar del Bufalo was born in Rome on January 6, 1786. Before his 23rd birthday he was ordained a priest, July 31, 1808. Seven years later, on August 15, 1815, Gaspar founded the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. And he was not yet 52 when he died on December 28, 1837. The medical report called him a "victim of charity" because even though he was in ill health himself, he continued to minister to the victims of the cholera epidemic that broke out in Rome. Gaspar was beatified in 1904 and named a saint on June 12, 1954.

Signs of Compassion

It was a very trying time, just three years before the outbreak of the French Revolution when Gaspar was born. Napoleon had already begun to trample on every human right as well and the rights of the Church. By the time Gaspar was eleven, Napoleon had forced Pope Pius VI into exile and took over the government of Rome. As a youngster Gaspar gave short sermons to his family and friends and showed a great concern for the poor and sick. Perhaps because he came from a family of meager means and because he himself had been a sickly child (almost dying at the age of two, only to be cured through the intercession of St. Francis Xavier), Gaspar's compassion for the poor and outcasts consumed him. He spent his summer vacations as a youth visiting hospitals and bringing meals to the hungry. When Gaspar was 18, desiring to imitate St. Francis Xavier, he began organizing for action on behalf of the "people on the fringe," one of his greatest gifts. He frequented the market place where he would minister to the marginalized: offering religious instruction to peasants from rural areas who came to Rome to see their hay, providing catechism for orphans and children of the poor, and setting up a night shelter for

the homeless.

Gaspar's Companions

Gaspar continued what became his life's work of ministering to the outcast and speaking words of comfort to all. But he did not do these things alone: his finest trait was his ability to draw others to himself as co-workers. What drew them to him was his intellectual ability, his good will, and his holiness. When giving instructions at the Basilica of San Marco the Canons there gave him the nickname "the little apostle" (apostoletto).

Courage of Conscience

While engaged with his companions in the apostolic work of evangelizing the cart drivers (barrozari) and farmers from the countryside who came into the Roman Forum, Gaspar met Fr. Francesco Albertini, the canon of S. Nicola. Albertini became his spiritual advisor and had a profound influence on Gaspar, teaching him a deep love and appreciation for the blood of Christ. Gaspar often referred to Albertini as the founder of our Community. Together they founded the Pious Union of the Most Precious Blood in 1808.

In the meantime, Napoleon and his forces began to put pressure on the new pope, Pius VII, taking him prisoner and exiling him from the papal states in May of 1809. As the French took over the country, fear and corruption held sway. Gaspar witnessed it all with a torn heart and doubled his efforts and preaching.

Then on June 13, 1810, Gaspar was brought before the magistrate to take an oath of allegiance to the emperor. In words that echo the Gospel of John when Jesus said: "the truth will set you free," Gaspar told the magistrate: "I would rather die or suffer evil than take such an oath. I cannot. I must not. I will not." For the courage of his conviction, Gaspar was sentenced to prison. But even though his body was incarcerated, the truth had set his spirit free. While in prison, his health once again began to deteriorate, but his mind and heart continued to expand. A dream was about to be born.



Fresco found on a courtyard wall in Giano, Italy portraying the life of Gaspar
cpps-preciousblood.org/gallery

Years of Exile

While exiled, Gaspar continued to preach and teach whenever he could. Though he had performed works of mercy for most of his young life, now in the silence of his cell this work was clearly defined by the Precious Blood of Christ. In solitude of exile, his vision became clear: to continue the works of mercy and evangelization in the context of community.

He and Albertini prepared the basis for the congregation of missionaries Gaspar established in 1815 in Giano, Italy, after he was released from prison, and drew up fundamental articles for the institute of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood. He would join forces with other men and women united in the bond of charity to touch others with the redeeming grace of blood of Christ.

Enemies

We cannot speak about Gaspar without noting his courage in the face of his enemies. Even within the Church there were priests, bishops, and even popes who opposed Gaspar. He was painfully aware and often humiliated that he was the subject of false rumors and accusations.

Gaspar's enemies filled Pope Leo XII's ears with rumors about Gaspar being a "false reformer," alleging that the Society was illegal, that its members were interested only in eating and drinking. In an audience with Leo XII on August 15, 1826, Gaspar finally had the chance to offer a defense. At the end of the audience the pope embraced the missionary and said, "You have many enemies, but fear not. Leo XII is now on your side."

Gregory XVI brought the most pain to Gaspar by threatening to suppress this congregation. Gaspar boldly battled back, convinced that his congregation was the *opera di Dio* (God's work). "Let God do whatever he wishes with my life and my reputation, as well as my honor," he wrote. "If I am to be rejected, let it serve for his glory...I have total trust that the Society, which is entirely God's, will go forward." Fr. Innocenzo Betti, one of Gaspar's first followers, wrote: "I see the poor Canon, afflicted and torn, despite all of his virtues, as he watches the axe being wielded at the plant for which he sacrificed so much of himself up to now." Ultimately, Gregory XVI became convinced of Gaspar's true character. It was he who gave the society its first official house in Rome and gave his approval to the initiation of the processes for Gaspar's beatification and canonization.

The Mission: To Renew and Reconcile

Napoleon was defeated in January 1814 and Gaspar was free to return to Rome to begin his mission as an apostle of the Precious Blood. He had spent four years in exile and imprisonment, but his enthusiasm had not waned. He came back to a city that was in chaos. In the aftermath of Napoleon's occupation, the church in Rome was experiencing great turmoil. Pope Pius VII praised Gaspar for the work he was doing, and appointed him to preach missions throughout the city and surrounding countryside for the spiritual renewal of the people, and especially for the clergy who had compromised under Napoleon. Gaspar quickly accepted the assignment as the path he was to pursue for





Prayer table at Companion retreat

the rest of his life. In responding to the Holy Father's request, Gaspar drew upon the rich resources of two of his mentors, Frs. Albertini and Bonnani, to begin a Society of Apostolic Life. From that point on, he closed his many letters with the identification, "Apostolic Missionary."

Gaspar's priests and brothers did an amazing job of rechristianizing the Papal States and surrounding area. But it was not easy work. The people were sometimes rough and uneducated, opposed to religion

and to clerics. Uprisings were frequent. When Gaspar's missionaries were sent to the city of Benevento the papal delegate called it "a jungle of untamed beasts." But after 15 days of mission work by the society, the city was transformed through the reconciling Word of God.

Gaspar's Companions

In the course of his missionary life, there were several attempts not only to prevent Gaspar and his companions from entering certain cities but even assaults on his life. One failed attempt was to poison him. Gaspar's defense was his secure confidence in God's will: "in all things, whatever God wishes." On another occasion, as a member of the "Carbonari" approached Gaspar to stab him, the man was suddenly disarmed, not physically, but by Gaspar's words: "Brother, do you wish to go to confession?"

St. Gaspar brought devotion to the Blood of Christ out of the sanctuary and into the streets. His preaching was rooted in the saving act of Christ on the cross and so he carried the crucifix close to his heart. Indeed, the mission cross became the symbol of the newly-formed Missionaries.

Gaspar's words and witness became the wings to lift the burden of sin from the hearts of his listeners. He called people to reconciliation, to restore that right relationship with God and others.

Among the Outlaws

The power of Gaspar's presence and preaching was found most dramatically in his work with the gangs of outlaws that were terrorizing the Papal States at the time. These bandits were holding up carriages and robbing and beating travelers. Fear pervaded the city of Rome and the surrounding areas. Though the government sent special military units into the hills to capture the outlaws, still the terror continued.

Confronted with this persistent and painful problem, Gaspar said the answer lay not in force and punishment but in love and religious instruction. Armed with the crucifix as his only defense, Gaspar personally sought out the bandits, talked with them, and gradually won their



Fr. Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S. delivers the homily at Mass during the bicentennial pilgrimage in Giano, Italy.



Fr. Larry Hemmelgarn, C.P.P.S.
presides at liturgy in Giano, Italy
during the bicentennial pilgrimage.
cpps-preciousblood.org/gallery

trust and confidence.

His success continues to be celebrated to this day by the people living in the city of Sonnino. After the government of the Papal States had issued a decree for the destruction of this city of uncontrollable banditry, Gaspar wrote to Pope Pius VII, offering a plan to reform it that included building permanent mission houses to minister to the people there. Gaspar managed to draw sizeable numbers of outlaws into his retreats. In time, Gaspar and his men restored the feeling of trust in Sonnino.

In his 23 years as a missionary, Gaspar preached endlessly in missions, retreats, and conferences to every group imaginable: priests, sisters, lawyers, artists, prisoners. He was a gifted preacher. Our third moderator general, Venerable John Merlini, said of his preaching that "his very appearance on the podium moved people, especially when he took hold of the Crucifix. He would work his way into the hearts of his listeners...Both the learned and the unlearned would flock to hear him."

Gaspar and his missionaries visited city after city. "I wish that I could have a thousand tongues,"

he wrote at this time, "to endear every heart to the Precious Blood of Jesus."

The Dream: The Dream Becomes Reality

On one occasion Gaspar had given a mission in the little town of Giano in Umbria, where there was an abandoned monastery, San Felice. Gaspar saw that old structure, in need of repair, as a place to take up residence. So it was at San Felice near Giano, Italy, on August 15, 1815, that Gaspar founded the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

It was Gaspar's vision to wed the spirituality of the Precious Blood with the concept of a community for apostolic works of mercy. This sacred union gave birth to a Society of Apostolic Life that would "proclaim peace through the blood of the cross."

Fr. Joe Nassal writes: "A few years ago I had the privilege of visiting the birthplace of our Society, Giano, a beautiful spot which sits on a hill near Rome. With vineyards draping the landscape, this historic and holy shrine is now a retreat house operated by the Italian Province of the Missionaries. I could imagine Gaspar sitting in this sacred place. In this solitude, God gave shape to his dream of an apostolic society bearing the name of the Precious Blood. A community that would become a beacon of hope and reconciliation for a wounded world. With the

*"Let us renew our most intimate union in Jesus Christ,
the only delight of our hearts."*

~ St Gaspar del Bufalo ~

promise Jesus gave to his disciples, ‘I will be with you always, even to the ends of earth,’ sealed upon his heart, Gaspar set out from San Felice to heal and to reconcile.

“We celebrated Eucharist the afternoon we were there. As we gathered around the altar and circled the sanctuary, the vision of Gaspar became real. And the promise of the ‘ends of the earth’ was enfleshed. Gathered around that altar were members of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood from Italy and Austria, Germany and Poland, Spain and Portugal, India and Tanzania, Chile and Peru, Guatemala and Brazil, the United States and Canada. Though we were from different countries and cultures, spoke different languages and lived different lifestyles, still we were one in Gaspar’s vision. Amid our diversity, we discovered our unity: the bond of the blood of Christ.

Companions Today

Gaspar’s gift of attracting and inviting others into his work, continues today in the Precious Blood Companions. Gaspar involved the laity in the missions he preached and in the groups he established to carry on after the missions. In that same spirit Companions are responding to a call to be involved in the work of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, ministering to those on the fringes of society and reconciling all through the power of the saving Blood of Christ.



Companions and members in ministry together
kcprovince.org

Maria de Mattias

One of the greatest consolations to Gaspar was a mission he gave in the town of Vallecorsa in 1822. The town had seen horrible strife in 1814 as factions battled for its control; eighteen people had been massacred in the church, and one woman stabbed directly in front of the main altar. Since that time the town had been stricken with fear and hatred, and a spirit of revenge. St. Gaspar arrived there as a messenger of peace and reconciliation. Among his listeners



Companion proclaiming the Word
Giano, Italy

was a 17-year-old girl named Maria de Mattias. She was attracted to the crucifix that Gaspar held as he preached. Between the saint and Maria there was an almost immediate silent communication, an invitation without words. Several years later, Fr. John Merlini, as her spiritual director, was instrumental in advising Maria as she found a congregation of women affiliated with Missionaries of the Precious Blood, the Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood (ASC).



Statue of St. Gaspar
St. Charles Center
Carthagen, Ohio

Keeping the Dream Alive

The spirit of St. Gaspar still animates the priests, brothers, and Companions of the Precious Blood. His spirit calls us to compassion for the poor and outcasts; inspires us to confront unjust and oppressive structures; encourages us to seek communion with all creation. We are, in the words of St. Paul, “ambassadors of reconciliation” who strive to live the spirituality of the Blood of Christ in our world today. This Precious Blood stains our hands, our hearts, our imaginations and leads us to pursue peace and seek justice for all God’s people.

St. Gaspar risked his life so that others might experience peace. He refused to compromise his faith, choosing to obey God rather than the state in matters of conscience. He preached with the power of his convictions and touched others with the compassion of Jesus. His life is our life; his mission is our challenge; his dream is our destiny.

For Reflection and Discussion...

Gaspar heard the cry of the blood among the poor and sick and those with needs. Where do I hear the cry of the blood in the world? What is my response?

Let us Pray...



Jesus Washing Peter's Feet by Ford Madox Brown

Visio Divina

Visio Divina is similar to Lectio Divina; however, in Visio Divina, meditation and prayer is sparked by a sacred picture rather than sacred writing.

Study the above picture. Let the image penetrate into your heart. Capture the details, the colors, the lighting.

To what is your attention being drawn. Focus just on that. What thoughts come to mind? How is God speaking to you as you meditate on this specific area of the picture? Are you being called to something?

Allow this reflection to bring you to prayer. What is your response to God? What do you feel moved to express to him?

Now just rest in the divine presence. Enjoy the silence. Relish the divine embrace. Bask in his love.

Meditation 6

Is There a Precious Blood Way to Pray?

by Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S.

As the disciples approached Jesus asking him to teach them how to pray, I was wondering if there is a Precious Blood way to pray. What spiritual exercises might we consider to stretch our hearts to be more inclusive? Beyond particular prayers – as we know from the Gospel, Jesus didn't teach the disciples a prayer so much as an attitude, a way to pray – how might people who claim the spirituality of the blood of Christ pray?

I offer a few tentative reflections based on three major images of Precious Blood spirituality: covenant, cross and chalice.

COVENANT PRAYER



Insignia crafted by John Wolf, C.P.P.S.

Since Precious Blood spirituality reflects the new covenant written upon our hearts in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we might consider a symbol of covenant as an ever-expanding sacred circle. In silence, we close our eyes and open our hearts. We picture first those who are closest to us — family members, friends, community members, Companions — who form our most intimate circle of friends. As we picture each face as slides projected on a blank wall, we hold the picture in our soul's eyes for just a moment before moving on to the next one.

Next picture those we find easy to like but with whom we have no particular depth of relationship. Here again are some community members, neighbors, coworkers, acquaintances whose company we enjoy but with whom we would not share the deepest secrets of our hearts. Hold these faces in memory as they flash upon the soul's screen. Remember especially those who you are aware are in need of some special grace from God because of illness, loss, transition, tragedy, or suffering of any sort. Remember also in a spirit of gratitude particular blessings received: the joy of a new birth, new job, new home, new love.

As the circle of the covenant prayer grows larger, include all those in our place of ministry, or in the neighborhood, or place of employment. If you drive to work, follow the route you take and include all you pass along the way. Now as the circle grows larger, include all in the city where you live. Allow the circle to stretch even more as you include all in the state, in the country, in the world, and beyond. And in this great beyond, slow down the slides that flash in your soul's screen to hold the faces of those who have died and are now as stars shining in the night sky.

But this covenant prayer is not quite complete. The circle has grown so large that one can no longer detect any boundaries. But just to be sure, remember those you find most difficult to love. Picture in this circle of covenant those who have broken promises with you; those who have betrayed you. Hold them there as long as you can. As tempting as it is to skip past

those faces quickly hold them close and sense how the circle is so large you can no longer grasp any edges. If one or two are clinging by a thread to the edge of your circle, lend a hand to bring them closer to the center. Granted, they may never be part of your inner sacred circle. The important thing is don't leave them outside. For if we do, the covenant will so shrink as to make it impossible to pray.

BLOOD OF THE CROSS PRAYER

The second major symbol of our spirituality is the cross. Specifically, how the blood of the cross has redeemed us, reconciled us, brought us near to one another. Here, the meditation focuses on the suffering of our own lives and uniting our suffering with those of Christ. In our prayer, we imagine ourselves standing at the foot of the cross. Like Mary, Woman of the New Covenant, we find the courage to trace our own scars and sense we are not alone.

*The blood of the cross has redeemed us,
reconciled us, brought us near to one another.*

The intimacy of this prayer is found in the ritual we celebrate on Good Friday: the veneration of the cross. We kiss the cross. In this holy kiss, we unite all that we are with the One who knows our pain. But more than personal or private devotion or a practice of piety, this prayer also unites us with the suffering ones of our planet. We place here at the foot of the cross those intentions, those people, those places in our world today where violence reigns, where death is epidemic, where chaos becomes the order of the day.



Mission Cross in Giano, Italy
cpps-preciousblood.org/gallery

The prayer of the blood of the cross is a prayer of solidarity. We stand with those who like Jesus are experiencing their own crucifixion. We can stand there because we remember our own experiences of crucifixion. We plead on behalf of those who are dying or in dangerous situations. When we pray before the cross, we come to know that the answer to our prayer is found in our unwavering belief that we are not alone.

CHALICE PRAYER

Finally, the prayer of the chalice gives us a visual reminder of how our very human lives mingle with the very holiness of God. Again, we image placing in this cup all that we are or all that we hope to be. We fill the chalice with choice, red wine. We see this wine as the fruit of our labors and our love. It is the cup of suffering but also the cup of blessing. Place in the cup our friends, our memories of joy, our hope for the future. As we do, we say simply:

“Blood of Jesus, refresh me;”

“Blood of Jesus, redeem me;”

“Blood of Jesus, remind me;”

“Blood of Jesus, reconcile me;”

“Blood of Jesus, inebriate me.”



Precious Blood Center
Liberty, Missouri

It doesn't matter so much what words we say as we look into the cup. Choose a phrase that most adequately reflects what you are experiencing in your heart as you begin your time of prayer. Say it slowly, reflectively. Say it over and over, until you are no longer thinking about the words. Personally, I like that last one: **Blood of Christ inebriate me.** This mantra reminds me that we are to be intoxicated with the Blood of Christ; drunk with the dream of eternity. When we come to the end of our time of prayer, drink deeply of the love God has for us. And then pass the blessing around. As Precious Blood people, may we always include in our prayer our deep yearning for reconciliation among all peoples and a deep desire for our ongoing renewal in the blood of Christ.

For Reflection and Discussion...

Write a prayer or a poem or create your own expression of one of the Precious Blood themes of cross, cup, or covenant.

Meditation 7

Our Precious Blood Family in the U.S.

Founders and foundresses share a spirituality of the Blood calling us to be open to the new.

FATHER BRUNNER: Relevant for Today?



Fr. Francis de Sales Brunner
cppsmissionaries.org

by Dominic Gerlach, C.P.P.S., edited by Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S.

Fr. Francis de Sales Brunner became a member of the Society of the Precious Blood on September 27, 1838. He built up a community of CPPS in his native Switzerland. Five years later he would respond to an urgent request from Bishop John Purcell of Cincinnati to minister to the German immigrants in his new state. Accompanied by seven priests and seven seminarians and brothers, Brunner voyaged to the United States arriving in Cincinnati in December of 1843. He established eight mission stations in northwestern Ohio and one in Indiana during the next fifteen years. Fr. Brunner was the founder of the American province, which now are the provinces of Cincinnati and Kansas City and also included the former Province of the Pacific.

The Venerable John Merlini held Fr. Brunner in very high esteem. He exhorted the American superiors immediately after Brunner's death to cultivate his memory by saving his writings and publishing his biography.

However, there was no immediate, unified enthusiasm for Brunner in the United States. His rule had irritated some members whose animosity continued after his death. The same iron will and single-minded passion that helped him establish the Precious Blood Congregation in this country against all odds were seen as obstinacy and wrong-headedness by his detractors. However, by the 1890's the atmosphere had changed and the admirers of Brunner won out.

By the early 1900's, still very much under the influence of the late Fr. Brunner's rule, the Society was experiencing an era of rapid growth and recognition. The number of vocations to the Society grew, stimulated partly by the opening of Saint Joseph's College in 1891 and the expansion of Saint Charles Seminary in Carthage, Ohio, especially with the new building in 1922.

The beatification of Gaspar del Bufalo in 1904 aroused little excitement in the United States. But it was Brunner who continued to inspire the province during these years, which is reflected in the fact that as late as 1931 the new minor seminary at Canton, Ohio, was named Brunnerdale in honor of Brunner, not Gaspar. It was still Brunner who was perceived as having given the American Province the formula to prosper.

By the late 1940's and the early 1950's, a reversal had set in. Several reasons suggest themselves. At a time when literal conformity to canon law came into its own, Brunner's work was perceived as somewhat irregular. Also, at this time, a new definitive historical study of Brunner was launched. It let the facts speak for themselves, unfortunately not in the context of Brunner's time, but in the context of the 1940's and 1950's. In the 1950's there were signs that we were going to become a fully canonical religious order, whether it fits our needs or not.

However, I would venture to say that there was a deeper reason for abandoning

Brunner's cult, a reason that was all the stronger because it was subconscious. The American Province in its origins had been associated with poor, humble immigrants. It was from the same poor (either in Europe or later on in America) that the vocations to the Society were drawn. Yet, as the descendants of immigrants approached the fulfillment of the American Dream, the C.P.P.S. kept close pace with them, until by the end of World War II they had together reached what we might call middle class affluence. Then the rigorous moral and pious traditions associated with Brunner began to feel uncomfortable. A Precious Blood priest who joined a country club could no longer imagine that Brunner was still smiling down on him from heaven.

I recall most vividly an experience that occurred in the early 1950's. I was sent out on a recruiting journey for Saint Joseph's College. Since this was a new venture for me, I asked a seasoned confrere how I might make the college attractive to a high school senior. He told me to be sure to stress the fact that with a college degree the graduate can expect to make \$300,000 more in his lifetime than a person who doesn't go to college. After having been nurtured on Brunner spirituality for twelve years, this shocked me!

Later on, I learned that recruitment propaganda for Brunnerdale had taken a similar direction, one that stressed the "middle class" advantages of the school in terms of varsity sports, swimming pool, superior academic standards and other benefits. In effect, Brunner was rapidly disappearing from "Brunner"dale also.

All of this may lead us to ask if Fr. Brunner's influence is relevant for us today. If we limit our consideration to *externals*, such as the pious image of Brunner that looks down on visitors in the St. Charles Center corridor, his monastic inclinations, and his time conditioned governance and economizing, then my answer would be yes. Brunner is irrelevant. But in all fairness we must look beyond the externals to what was *basic* in Brunner's life. I have in mind specifically his apostolate to the humble, poor elements among the German Catholic population. His achievements may not have been as dramatic as Gaspar's were with the gangs of bandits, but they were parallel, equally solid, and certainly lasting. His deep religious convictions kept a struggling Society together in a mission territory with no material help from the home base in Rome. And he garnered many vocations – precisely from the kind of people he served. He was held in high regard among the poor and humble.

- *Prayer*
- *Self-denial*
- *Community*
- *Adaptability*

What then makes Brunner relevant for us today? There were first of all the solid, Gospel inspired values of *prayer* (a conviction that life is God dependent), *self-denial* (without which life is empty), and *community* (one can scarcely teach others community when one does not practice it himself). These are perennial values, often listed as prayer, fasting, and almsgiving respectively. However, there was a fourth value that he exemplified, one that was Brunner's forte, one that demands our attention, and that is *adaptability*.

In 1839, Brunner had been sent by his Italian brethren to bring the Society to German-speaking Europe. However, to succeed, he had to adapt to circumstances. Because the political-ecclesiastical establishment there was stacked up against him he turned toward the apostolate to the poor, untutored classes, both men and women, who then supported themselves by labor and begging.

*The world
keeps changing,
and we,
as missionaries,
are flexible.*

His great opportunity came, however, with Archbishop Purcell's invitation to come to Ohio. Here again, he was assigned to the poor in the remotest region of the diocese. He served the immigrants in America, which invariably included the poorest of the poor, namely, the orphans. One memorable example of the latter was the future Bishop Joseph Dwenger. To accept religious vocations of poor youngsters and support them all the way through high school, college, and the seminary eventually became one of Brunner's most glorious traditions. Many Precious Blood priests can still remember and attest to the fact that what enabled them to become priests was this generous policy of the Society.

To accomplish all this, Brunner had to make adaptations, not to the spirit of Gaspar's Rule, but to the letter. Specifically, in these new conditions Brunner departed from the letter of Gaspar's Rule by committing his men to work chiefly in the parochial ministry. (Gaspar never intended for his missionaries to be parish priests.) Establishing parishes was the need of the Church in Ohio, yet Brunner kept to Gaspar's spirit by insisting on the term "missionaries" and on residence in community. He also insisted on financial accountability to the Society and to a strong bond or promise of fidelity to the Society.

The term "adaptability" implies that we cannot expect to follow Brunner's example literally any more than Brunner followed Gaspar's example literally. The world keeps changing, and we, as missionaries, are flexible.

The poor are the ones to whom Jesus asked us to spread the Good News. They are now found largely in cities, people whose condition (or rejection) has led them into the pit of despair, with all the problems that follow: alienation, violence, drugs, unemployment, lack of education, AIDS, etc. These are really not all that much different from the problems Brunner met among the immigrants of his time. The common denominator is despair, the remedy for which is the "Good News" with muscle in it.

What keeps clouding our vision is that we have come to view the world through middle-class glasses. The fields are indeed as ripe for the harvest as ever, and the workers will not be lacking because vocations will be drawn from the people served. No, Father Brunner is not at all irrelevant except in the eyes of those who want it so.

(The late Fr. Dominic Gerlach, C.P.P.S. taught for many years at Saint Joseph's College, Rensselaer, Indiana.)

MARIA ANNA PROBST BRUNNER

The Sisters of the Precious Blood were founded by a creative Swiss woman, Maria Anna Probst Brunner. She was a widowed mother of six. Maria Anna had a deep love for the Eucharist and for the poor, especially orphans.

In 1833, while in Rome with her son, Fr. Francis De Sales Brunner, Mother Brunner enrolled in the Archconfraternity of the Precious Blood. In the Church of St. Nicholas she listened to the preaching of Canon Gaspar del Bufalo. After her husband died and her children became independent, Maria Anna realized her life work was still not completed. At age 68 she experienced an unusual calling from God and dared to say yes. Women were attracted to her life of adoration of the Eucharist, reconciliation, simplicity, and outreach to the poor. These

women joined her in that total dedication to the Precious Blood.

Mother Brunner died in 1836, but she had begun a second family and the work of this family was to continue and spread. In 1844 several sisters came to America and from the beginning the Congregation of the Sisters of the Precious Blood has spread. The motherhouse is in Dayton, Ohio.

You can learn more about this congregation at its website, preciousbloodsistersdayton.org.

SAINT MARIA DE MATTIAS

by Maureen Lahiff

“Happy will we be,” she wrote, “if we can give our lives and all our blood for the faith, in order to save even one person.”

Maria de Mattias was born and baptized on February 4, 1805 in Vallecorsa, Italy. She was born into a period of constant political turmoil; since her family had property and wealth, it was not safe for Maria and her brothers to play outside. Though Maria was a lively and restless child, her life was boring. Her father did not think his daughters should be taught to read and write, yet Maria soon began devouring the family’s many spiritual books.

In Lent of 1822, a Precious Blood mission team came to Vallecorsa, led by Gaspar del Bufalo. For three weeks, the whole town was caught up in the drama of a Precious Blood mission. Gaspar’s preaching on the love of God, who sent his Son to pour out his Blood that all might be saved, touched Maria. She heard Gaspar’s invitation to imitate Jesus by giving our lives for our brothers and sisters as addressed directly to her.



Image of Saint Maria De Mattias in the sisters' museum in Acuto, Italy. Maria's outstretched arms symbolize the sisters' spirit of welcoming all of God's children.

cpps-preciousblood.org/gallery

In 1824, Giovanni Merlini preached the Lenten mission. Maria’s conversations with Merlini were the beginning of a relationship that lasted for the rest of her life. From the time he met her, Merlini wondered if Maria could be the person to found the community of women that would complete the work planned by Gaspar and Francesco Albertini during their exile.

Merlini put Maria in charge of the Daughters of Mary, the association for girls. Maria began to invite the young women of Vallecorsa into her home on Sunday afternoons for prayer and devotions. Sometimes Maria would speak from her heart as well as leading them in prayer and adoration. Soon, older women of the town began coming as well, Gaspar supported Merlini’s work with Maria, and delegated him to be her spiritual director and mentor.

It was a long wait for companions and a suitable place to found a community and school. Finally, near the end of 1833, the place and conditions were right, in Acuto. Maria's plan for Acuto included far more than a school. Drawing on Albertini's writings, the Fundamental Articles, she envisioned a complete program of devotions, spiritual formation, and retreats, educating women and girls in the faith and its practice—a mission house for women directed by women. The school opened in March 4, 1834. The people of Acuto were enthusiastic and responsive.

What characterized the community from the beginning was its distinctive combination of adoration and apostleship. Gaspar commented that the lifestyle of the sisters should not be austere; because of their heavy apostolic work.

Word of what Maria was doing spread throughout the villages and towns of central Italy. Maria made arduous journeys to visit the small communities scattered throughout the mountains. Many of these places had no resident priests, so instructions and devotions led by the sisters were the only regular sources of spiritual life. Maria describes her visit to Vallero-tonda in 1860; “giving instructions to the girls and married women; in the evening there are about a hundred, but on Sundays there are around three hundred, not counting the men who stand outside.” Maria preached from balconies and standing on tables in town squares. In her letters to Merlini, Maria expressed doubts about speaking in public, but she also reported her satisfaction at the number of people seeking confession and communion in response.

In his letters, Merlini often urged Maria to take care of herself. Maria struggled against illness all her life. She suffered from asthma, and often succumbed to fevers. Even when she was physically exhausted, Maria was full of energy for the work and the travels it required. The rapid growth of the community, the scarcity of resources, and the press of the people's needs often resulted in friction and disputes that Maria had to resolve.

When Maria died on August 20, 1866, in Rome, she was 61 years old. The community had over fifty schools in Italy, and had spread to Austria, Germany and England. Maria was declared blessed on October 1, 1950 by Pope Pius XII, and was canonized on May 18, 2003 by Pope John Paul II. Her feast is celebrated on the day of her birth and baptism, February 4.

Eventually the Sister Adorers of the Blood of Christ (A.S.C.) were established in the United States. They have welcomed lay associates to share in their spirituality and ministries. You can learn more about their Community on their website, www.adorers.org.

Maria's Legacy to Us

Maria implemented Albertini's vision of the universal call to holiness and mission. She was highly creative, adapting the Church calendar and the devotions of the people in practical ways, fostering the spiritual life of busy people. Maria saw women's potential for being active agents of evangelization, salt, light, and leaven in their homes. Maria saw that the call to adoration and mission was extended to all. This was concretely expressed by inviting lay auxiliaries to adore and pray alongside the sisters. Her vision of church and the participation of the laity anticipate Vatican II; indeed, we might say that Albertini, Gaspar, and Maria helped fashion a church capable of conceiving what was born at Vatican II.

Albertini, Gaspar, and Maria helped fashion a church capable of conceiving what was born at Vatican II.

Maria's devotion to the blood of Christ, in the era when she could not receive the Precious Blood, calls those of us who have the privilege of sharing in the cup to a deeper appreciation of our communion in the Blood of Christ.

*"Happy will we be if we can give our lives and all our blood
for the faith, in order to save even one person."*

~ St. Maria de Mattias ~

MOTHER THERESA WEBER

1822-1848

Foundress of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon, MO

The congregation began in 1945 in Steinerberg, Switzerland, when a small group of young women joined together to live a life of prayer and sacrifice. Mother Theresa Weber was elected superior. With a strong and active devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus, the first sisters worshipped before the Blessed Sacrament and prayed for the reparation of sins through the power of Christ's redeeming Blood. Immediate needs led them also to the field of education and soon afterwards to the making of church vestments.

God guided the sisters from Switzerland to the French Alsace, then to Germany and finally to the United States in 1870. Their motherhouse was established in O'Fallon, MO, in 1875. Since then the missionary efforts of the sisters have returned to Europe and carried them to South America.

The congregation's mission is being carried out in partnership with lay men and women associates, called Partners.

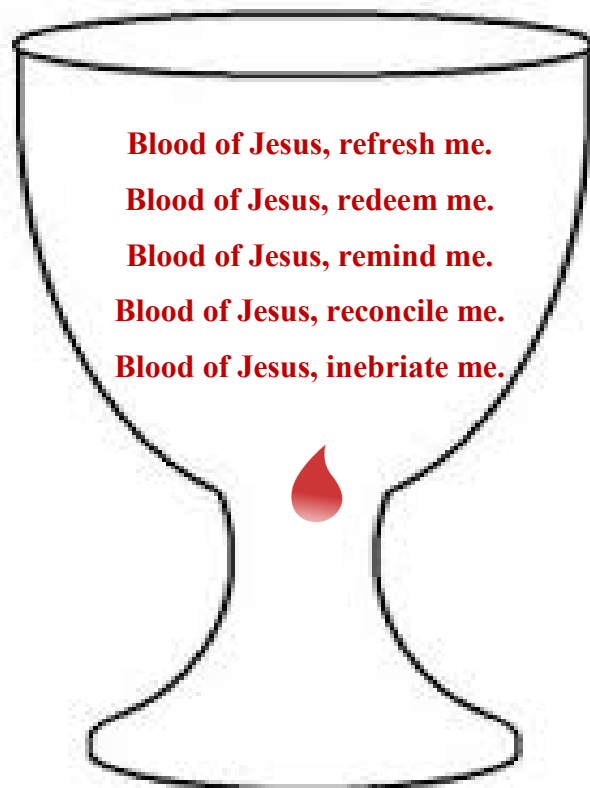
You can learn more about the sisters at their website, www.cpps-ofallon.org.

*"Goodness always tends to spread.
Every authentic experience of truth
and goodness seeks by its very
nature to grow within us, and
any person who has experienced a
profound liberation becomes more
sensitive to the needs of others."*

*~ Pope Francis ~
Joy of the Gospel*

For Reflection and Discussion...

What common threads do you see in the life of St. Gaspar, Fr. Brunner, St. Marie de Mattias, Mother Brunner and Theresa Weber?



Maria, Re-Member our Vision

by Pam Wiwel, ASC Associate

Maria De Mattias be our companion and
guide as we go forth within your vision
to perform our capillary actions.

Let us remember your generosity to the
dear neighbor by sharing our graces
and resources so that abundant life
flows to all.

Let us remember your journeys over
rock-strewn trails when we encounter
frustrations on our own footpaths.

Let us remember your sufferings and
patience in doing what is good when
we are shut out by the doors of indifference.

Let us call upon your visionary strength
found in Forgiveness, Reconciliation
and Understanding for those we meet.

Grant us hope and perseverance that
our visions and actions will always
flow forth in praise of the Blood of Christ.

Blessed be the Blood of Jesus Christ
May it always be blest!





Missionaries of the Precious Blood from around the world process into Basilica of St. John Lateran on Feast of the Precious Blood during the 2015 bicentennial pilgrimage in Rome.

Impelled by the love of Christ, manifested especially in the shedding of his Blood, and aware of the needs of the Church, Gaspar del Bufalo, founder of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, longed to have “a thousand tongues to move hearts to the Precious Blood of Christ.” He was an excellent preacher not only in the pulpit but in the example of his life. He attracted a group of like-minded priests and brothers, uniting them by a bond of charity. He involved the laity in his missions.

In that number of the “thousand tongues” of his dream are today’s Missionaries of the Precious Blood and Companions.

Missionaries of the Precious Blood

In 1815, a Society of Apostolic Life was founded by Gaspar del Bufalo under the title of the Precious Blood. The Congregation has evolved and developed through the work of the Holy Spirit to its present structure and form. In this Meditation we consider the current structure and government as well as the role and place of the laity in the life of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

In the words of Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S., we are not “diocesan” nor are we “religious.” “Perhaps the foremost identifying aspect of our identity as a Society of Apostolic Life,” he writes, “is the ‘pastoral objective.’ When reflecting on spirituality, we must always keep in mind that it is a spirituality for mission. When speaking of community life and what form that might take today, we do so keeping before us always that we are in community for mission. Everything must be seen from this perspective.”

The new Code of Canon Law names three basic elements of Society of Apostolic Life; (a) the apostolic aim of the society



Members and Companions from the United States in front of the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome on the Feast of the Precious Blood at the 2015 bicentennial pilgrimage. cpps-preciousblood.org/gallery

(mission), (b) fraternal life in community (a communion of relationships in the bond of charity), and (c) the striving to live a life of charity (the spirituality of the Blood of Christ).

Bond of Charity

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood do not take vows as part of their membership in a Society of Apostolic Life. Instead, in accord with the vision of the founder the members live in a bond of charity. In the rite of definitive Incorporation each member makes a promise of fidelity to the Society that is mutually reciprocated. The mutual bond of charity is also included in the covenant rite made by Companions.

Normative Texts

The government of the Society is defined in the Normative Texts of the community. The Normative Texts are the Constitution, General Statutes, and the Provincial Statutes. These documents outline a form of governance that establishes authority within the context of the bond of charity.

In the Normative Texts the specifics, who has authority over what, are carefully spelled out. There is one basic form of government followed in provinces and in vicariates. At each level, a director and a council is elected by those who are to be governed. Additionally, provinces hold assemblies or annual meetings to discuss and vote on important issues.

The General Government

The supreme authority in the Society is exercised while the general assembly is in session. Representatives from all the provinces meet in Rome to handle the most important business of the Society and to elect the moderator general and his council. A general assembly may be called whenever the need arises, but ordinarily there is one called every six years, the length of the terms of those elected to serve in the general government.

The moderator general and his council are responsible for monitoring the overall state of the Society worldwide and promoting in ongoing renewal and expansion. They also conduct necessary business with the Vatican. The moderator, along with some councilors, reside and work at the community's house in Rome, making regular visits to all the members.

For the sake of the government and communal life, the Society is divided into provinces. Today there are more than 500 members in eight provinces serving in more than a dozen countries. In Europe there are the Italian, Teutonic (Germany and Austria), Iberian (Spain and Portugal) and Polish (Poland and Croatia) provinces. The Teutonic province has a vicariate in Brazil. The Italian Province has a vicariate in India. The only province in Africa is located in Tanzania, a former vicariate of the Italian Province. There are three provinces in North America. The Atlantic Province is headquartered

"A dream or vision is not a specific destination that we are trying to reach. Rather, they are more like a compass direction. They point the way of faithfulness for us. What is most important is that we take this journey together. Always we need to be taking the next step, and then we take the next step again and again."

William Nordonbrock, C.P.P.S.

in Toronto. It was formerly a vicariate of the Italian province and continues to have close ties with that province. Members of the Kansas City and Cincinnati Provinces minister in the U.S. and in missions abroad. The Cincinnati Province has established a vicariate in Chile and a mission in Peru. The Chilean vicariate sponsors a mission in Guatemala. The Kansas City province has established a mission in Vietnam. While falling under the sponsorship of a particular province, each vicariate or mission is somewhat autonomous.

Districts

Some of the provinces are further divided into districts. At district meetings, members discuss issues facing their province, and share community life. Districts do not have any direct governmental authority.

Provincial Assemblies

Every definitively incorporated member is entitled to participate in, and vote during a provincial assembly (a meeting of all the members of that province). The action of a provincial assembly is required to conduct the more important business of the province.

Provincial Council

The provincial director (usually just called the provincial) and his council are elected for a four-year term during an assembly. The provincial and his council (the number of councilors is determined by each province) conduct the ordinary affairs of the province. They settle policy questions and make personnel decision. Each province, through its provincial statutes, customizes its rule of life in accord with the Normative Texts.

Lay Associates

The Companion insignia (worn as a pin or pendant) is a cross, a cup, and a circle. The circle is a symbol of covenant. The insignia is presented during the covenant rite and worn by Companions.

From its founding, the members of the Society of the Precious Blood have been closely associated with the laity with whom they have worked and served.

Lay associates today are called Precious Blood Companions. They respond to their baptismal call to service through association and collaboration with members of the Society. This association is formalized in a covenant rite that allows each Companion to characterize his or her relationship with the Society in a covenant. Together the incorporated members and covenanted Companions strive to rediscover the call for Precious Blood spirituality in our time and culture.

“In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt. 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries,” but rather that we are always “missionary disciples.”

~ Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*

Precious Blood Volunteers

The mission of the Precious Blood volunteers is to form lay Christians in Precious Blood spirituality by building community, walking with those who suffer, and seeking reconciliation in a divided world. Volunteers live in community with other Precious Blood volunteers, priests, brothers, or sisters. They pray, work, and learn with lay people and religious while living a simple lifestyle that reflects hospitality, reconciliation, and common prayer. The experience is designed to challenge and deepen the volunteer's relationship with Jesus as they engage in daily community prayer, faith sharing, spiritual direction, and meeting with lay people and religious committed to renewal and reconciliation. The volunteer serves people who find themselves on the margins of our society. A volunteer shares in the mission of all Christians to bring hope to the suffering, reconciliation to the alienated, a sense of community to the lonely, and a deeper faith to all who seek God.

The mission of Precious Blood volunteers is to form lay Christians in Precious Blood spirituality by building community, walking with those who suffer, and seeking reconciliation in a divided world.

Union of the blood of Christ

The Union of the Blood of Christ (U.S.C.) is a canonically recognized lay association of the faithful. It has its own statutes, and the moderator general serves as its central director. Its main purpose is the spreading of Precious Blood devotion. The union of the Blood of Christ is most active in the Italian and Atlantic Provinces.

Conclusion

Since the Second Vatican Council, the world-wide C.P.P.S. has sought fitting ways to be faithful to Gaspar's charism in our time and in various cultures. We are called to "faithful creativity," a phrase coined by our former moderator general, Fr. Barry Fischer. General and provincial assemblies have focused on this ongoing renewal. Much effort has gone into a study of charism of our founder and Precious Blood spirituality. We continually look to the signs of the time and seek to find our faithful place in the life of the Church.

Like the other religious communities and societies of apostolic life, we have experienced a significant decline in our membership. This has not been easy to interpret. However, in the legacy of Gaspar we face each difficulty as another opportunity to find Christ with us and to be led by the Spirit. "Do not rupture our unity," Gaspar wrote to Don Innocenzo Betti January 1831. "Give explanations quietly and without agitation. Do not get aggravated when everyone does not think along the same lines as you... Look at yourself as well as the Institute... Pray more than ever."

Currently, the areas of growth for the Society are found in the developing nations of the world. The majority of our candidates are natives of Chile, Peru, Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Tanzania, Poland, India, or Vietnam. This brings a new richness and diversity to the Community. Another significant sign of hope for the Society is its renewed association with the laity. While in many ways it is the formalization of existing relationship, Companions mark one more step in the ongoing evolution of the life of the Community.

Finally, Fr. Fischer reminds us that even though years of reflecting on our identity, studying our spirituality, and the positive description of a Society of Apostolic Life offered by the revised Code of Canon law, “there is still much need for further clarification. Our identity continues to call for attention and discernment since it is a dynamic reality still in evolution.”

The Larger Precious Blood Family

In addition to the men’s Society of Apostolic Life, there are various congregations of women religious under the title of Precious Blood. During the past decade growing ties have brought together nine provinces of our Precious Blood family in the United States. These include the Sisters of the Precious Blood (C.P.P.S.) of Dayton, Ohio, founded by Mother Marie Brunner; the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood (C.P.P.S.) of O’Fallon, MO, founded by Sr. Theresa Weber; and the Sisters Adorers of the Blood of Christ (ASC) founded by St. Maria de Mattias, who have an American province.

The Precious Blood Leadership Conference

The leadership of the women’s communities and the provincials of the three North American men’s provinces meet at regular intervals to collaborate in various projects and activities such as Lent and Advent reflections and human rights efforts. The vocation and formation directors from the various congregations also gather annually.



Precious Blood priests and Companions

For Reflection and Discussion...

The Precious Blood family is a world-wide community of priests, brothers, sisters, and Companions. Discuss the implications for a community that is dealing with global issues—how can we help each other and reach out to each other through barriers of language and culture?

“...we are sustained by our daily personal encounter with the overwhelming love of God. Our mission is shaped by sharing that with others, especially those most in need of that mercy: the persecuted, the downtrodden, the oppressed.”

~ Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S. ~

Psalm of Liberation

The blood of Christ refreshes our souls,
gives us new courage, liberates our lives.
The blood of the poor soaks into the land,
cries out for justice, yearning for peace.

*We are redeemed in the blood of Christ.
We are washed in love.
Sent by the blood, stained by the blood;
we are servants of the blood of Christ.*

The bones of the weary ache for an answer,
searching for vision, shout out with new strength. *Response*

The blood of the wounded looking for healing,
teaching compassion, we touch with our hands. *Response*

Blood of new covenant welcomes the stranger,
seeking communion, we are companions. *Response*

The cup of salvation poured out in service,
stream of redemption, we thirst to be free. *Response*

The blood of the cross bringing us closer,
bonds us in charity, we long to be one. *Response*

The breath of the dying conspiring for life,
remembering mercy, we comfort with hope. *Response*



Scripture is filled with witnesses who responded to the call of God with unbelievable commitment and zeal. Frequently, these figures met the initial summons with dismay. Abraham and Sarah questioned how in their old age and barren state they could possibly parent a nation. Moses gave an endless list of reasons why he could not lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Jeremiah claimed to be too young. Mary claimed that it was not biologically possible for her to bear a child. Yet when these strong characters embraced God's will, there was no turning back. God always promised that he would remain with them, and that he did: gracing them with all the gifts they could possibly need to fulfill his will.

The prime example of unwavering commitment was found in Jesus Christ. Philippians 2:5-11 expresses his embodiment of this virtue:

*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
and being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.*

At the heart of Precious Blood Spirituality are the events that occurred at the Last Supper which we memorialize in the celebration of the Mass. We are motivated by the One who proclaimed, "Drink from it all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt26:27b,28). The Gospel of John relays our part of the covenant that was sealed by the Blood of Christ: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Jesus sets the bar high. The Precious Blood community personifies this sacred instruction by living out our charisms of reconciliation, hospitality, inclusiveness, peace, social justice, liberation, and solidarity.

At the conclusion of formation, candidates are invited to participate in the Precious Blood community by making a one-year covenant with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. This will unite the new Companions with men and women who are animated by the Blood of Christ as they live out Jesus' Great Commandment in this time and place. Subsequent covenants will be for three year.

*The prime example of unwavering commitment
was found in Jesus Christ.*

There are as many ways to live out Precious Blood Spirituality as there are people. A covenant is a personal document that solidifies your individual intentions. We recommend that you view writing your covenant as a thoughtful discernment process. Begin by asking God to be with you as your guide. Empty yourself so that you can be led by the Spirit. Be willing to ponder all that you have read, discussed, and experienced in formation. Review the vision statement, **Gather, Send**. Allow it all to enter your heart, percolate, and meet with the One who calls you by name. The covenant is the place to articulate your response to God's invitations discovered in this discernment process. How is God asking you to live out Precious Blood Spirituality?

How is God asking you to live out Precious Blood Spirituality?

Your sponsor or convener will give you a covenant form. As you write your covenant, express how your prayer life will enhance this new mission. Are you being called to a new prayer form or do you find your current prayer life allows you to grow in intimacy with Jesus? Is God asking you to explore other prayer options to find a good fit for you?

Comment on the ministry or ministries in which you intend to participate as you live out your spirituality. Remember that the ways to live out the Precious Blood charisms are endless. What is important is that you follow God's lead. How is he asking you to express your Precious Blood spirituality in concrete ways. God may be inviting some to incorporate our spirituality as they meet the demands of family life. Others may be called to care for people in need outside their immediate community. Building the kingdom is a huge undertaking, so God will call each of us to a different task.

Mention in your covenant your intentions to build your relationship with the incorporated members and Companions, not only those in your companion group but within the community at large. Throughout the year, you will be invited to community events. These are great opportunities to come to know others outside your immediate group with whom you share a sacred treasure. Everyone is at a different place in their lives with varying responsibilities. Consider what you think you can realistically fulfill.

Covenant is rooted in our Judeo-Christian tradition. You are invited to participate in this practice by discerning God's will for you and sealing your "yes" with this covenant.



Covenant Rite
St. Charles Center
Carthagen, Ohio
cpps-preciousblood.org/gallery



Lamb of God
wikipedia.org

Let us Pray...

We are all washed clean in the blood of the Lamb,
our sins forgiven,
our hearts strengthened,
our lives given purpose.
Grant to me, this day,
O Saving God,
The power of the Precious Blood
so that I might see the violence and disharmony
around and within me.
Move me to bring your life-giving love,
your reconciling power
to those who do not know you
and cannot hear your voice
in the events of their lives.
May this day be one of praise and honor
to the saving blood of Jesus.
Amen.

Companionship

Companionship begins with the Covenant Rite celebrated at a Provincial Assembly or community celebration.

Companionship includes

- on-going formation
- continuing in active ministry
- taking part in an annual retreat or day of reflection
- and sharing in as many Companion gatherings and provincial events as possible given one's state in life.

Companionship is grounded in Jesus' commandment to be inclusive: "This I command you, to love one another" (John 15:17). This simple command is at the center of our understanding of what it means to be Companions of the Precious Blood.

Covenant renewals after the first one-year covenant are for three-year periods.



Companion participating in the
Kansas City assembly
Kearney, Missouri

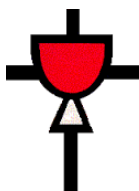
Glossary

C.P.P.S.: The official title of our Society is Congregatio Missionariorum Pretiosissimi Sanguinis Domini Nostri Jesu Christi. Its abbreviation by custom is C.P.P.S. Statue S1 of the Society's Constitution states that "Every province is free to translate this title according to the needs of its culture and language." The Cincinnati Province uses the title Missionaries of the Precious Blood. The official title of the Kansas City Province is Society of the Precious Blood, Kansas City Province, Incorporated dba Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

Images: The major images symbolizing Precious Blood Spirituality are cup, covenant, and cross. Meditations 2, 3, 4, and 6 elaborate on the significance of these images to the community.

Incorporated Member: A priest or brother canonically or officially recognized as a member of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

Insignias:



The Insignia of the
Cincinnati Province



The Insignia of the
Kansas City Province



The Insignia of the
Companion Movement

Pillars: The pillars of the Precious Blood community are spirituality, community, and mission.



Companion Retreat, Precious Blood Center, Liberty, Missouri

Convener's Name _____
Convener's Phone # _____
Convener's Email _____



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