

THE New Wine PRESS

Volume 27 No. 7 • March 2019





Let us serve God with holy joy.

-St. Gaspar del Bufalo, founder of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood

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Front cover image: Artwork from PBMR.org, Reaching Out from Within series. Drawing by Matt Sopron, who was just released after over 23 years in prison.

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

The Kansas City Province—incorporated members, covenanted companions, and candidates—united in prayer, service and mutual support, characterized by the tradition of its American predecessors, are missionaries of these times with diverse gifts and ministries. In a spirit of joy, we strive to serve all people—especially the poor—with care and compassion, hope and hospitality.

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

THE New Wine PRESS

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Printed on recycled paper by
McDonald Business Forms
Overland Park, Kansas



Walking the Justice Road

by Fr. Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S., Vice-provincial Director, Editor

*The birds they sang at the break of day. Start again, I heard them say,
Don't dwell on what has passed away or what is yet to be.*

*The wars they will be fought again, the holy dove be caught again,
bought and sold and bought again; the dove is never free.*

Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering.

There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.

"Anthem"

Leonard Cohen

Lent is often seen as primarily a time of fasting and self-denial. "Let's see, what should I give up for Lent this year?" But the gospel for Ash Wednesday already lays out the triple emphasis of the season: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Like the proverbial three-legged stool, none of these three activities work well without the other two—nor are they complete. "No sweets for me until Easter—except for fair-trade dark chocolate." "No meat for me on Friday, but can't wait for that all-you-can-eat fish fry."

The heart of Lent is social justice, i.e., living the faith rather than just "knowing" the faith. This can be seen especially and clearly in the weekday scriptures for the season. These were the original instructions, or catechesis, for the catechumens, whose preparation for the sacraments of initiation was most intense and focused during the weeks leading up to the Easter Vigil. Scripture, rather than doctrine, was the focus. The Lenten weekday readings were—and still are—what the church considered most important for a new Christian to know in order to practice the faith. Catechumens still spend Lent in final and intense preparation for the Easter sacraments; the rest of us are called to put into practice—or practice more intensely our—baptismal call.

Among the readings of the first four weekdays of Lent, we hear from Deuteronomy, "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live..." Then from Isaiah: "This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own." And finally, from Matthew 25: "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Not a word about substituting walleye for a cheeseburger—or M&M's instead of Christopher Elbow chocolates.

Themes of God's compassion and our duty to the poor are repeated throughout Lent, along with key themes of the Gospels: the call to servant discipleship, concern for the hungry and the poor, the mercy of God. Human frailty and brokenness is universal, but as the poet reminds us, this is precisely the “crack” that allows the light in. Responding to need and practicing justice is much more than just helping others. Social justice also flows from our recognizing the brokenness we all share. Openings for God, for one another.

In poetry also we encounter this theme of Lent and social justice. Consider these final verses from “The Temple” by George Herbert:

*Who goeth in the way which Christ hath gone,
Is much more sure to meet with him, than one
That travelleth by-ways:
Perhaps my God, though he be far before,
May turn, and take me by the hand, and more
May strengthen my decays.*

*Yet Lord instruct us to improve our fast
By starving sin and taking such repast
As may our faults control:
That ev'ry man may revel at his door,
Not in his parlor; banqueting the poor,
And among those his soul.*

Robert Herrick begins his poem “Lent” with the following verses:

*Is this a fast, to keep the larder lean?
And clean from fat of veals and sheep?*

*Is it to quit the dish of flesh, yet still
To fill the platter high with fish?*

*Is it to fast an hour, or ragged to go,
Or show a downcast look and sour?*

*No; 'tis a fast to dole thy sheaf of wheat,
And meat, unto the hungry soul.*

In an article I read recently, the author suggested a Lenten practice of “walking a new step on the justice road” each day. One could make a very long list, and I

believe that if any are worth doing for a day, then they are even better practiced as often as possible. Consider some possibilities:

- Pray for the immigrant or temporary foreign worker who picked the food you're eating.
- Drive the speed limit on the highway, turn the heat down a few degrees, and turn off any lights you're not using. When you get cold or passed on the highway (and you will!), thank God for the limited energy resources you have to use.
- Look at the service worker in front of you—grocery store clerk, custodian, hotel maid, busboy, fast-food server—and thank them and tell them they are doing a good job.
- Avoid self-check-out lanes in the grocery store. They are replacing people, after all. Instead, make grocery shopping a time for human interaction. Tip the bagger.
- Turn off your social media (For a whole day? Yes).
- As you read the newspaper, stop to pray—however briefly—for the people and issues being reported on. Do the same every time you hear a police or fire siren.
- Skip a meal today, and when you get hungry, pray for people who don't have enough food every day, who don't even have the choice to skip a meal.
- Don't use plastic bags or water bottled in plastic today. Better yet, no plastic for 40 days.
- Don't build walls. Instead make tables.
- Think of a personal deeply-held political belief, and then consider the opposing view. Can you come up with two or three aspects of the opposing view that deserve your consideration and respect?
- Use the following poem for reflection and prayer during Lent.

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Our Greatest Challenge in the New Creation

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

In his journal on February 24, 1966, Thomas Merton mused from his hermitage in Kentucky that the world, particularly the Catholic and religious world, was preoccupied by the revolutionary changes taking place in the church since the close of the Second Vatican Council. Merton wondered “if this anxiety to keep up (with all the changes) is not in fact an obstacle to the Holy Spirit?” His question resonates with those of us who might be anxious about what changes the New Creation might call forth from us.

Vatican II transformed not only the face of the church but its heart and soul. No longer was ministry the sole purview of priests and religious. After Vatican II, ministry flowed from the waters of baptism rather than the hands of a bishop at ordination or the religious superior at the time of profession. Priesthood was still viewed as a sacred, distinct calling, but clericalism toppled like so many statues on pedestals after a revolution. Or that was the hope and promise as the priesthood of the faithful became the norm.

This was just one aspect of the seismic changes that made the Second Vatican Council the signature symbol to define a new creation in Christ. It was a revolution. But for the transformational changes of Vatican II to be integrated into the life of the church, a deeper kind of revolution was necessary. Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker movement, defined this as the “revolution of the heart.” She knew that the changes of Vatican II would remain cosmetic rather than cosmic unless the community of believers embraced the challenge of inner transformation.

On my ordination announcement in 1982, I quoted Dorothy Day’s famous truth: “The greatest challenge of the day is how to bring about a revolution of the heart that has to start with each one of us. When we begin to take the lowest place, to wash the feet of others, to love our brothers and sisters with that burning love, that passion which led to the cross, then we can truly say, ‘Now I have begun.’” After almost thirty-seven years of priesthood, I am still a beginner, but her words resonate now more than ever as we move forward toward this New Creation.

As we did with the Companion movement, with the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation, and with various new ministries and new adventures in community living in our history, we need to live our way into a new way of being a Society of Apostolic Life as we seek to respond to the signs of the times. But it begins with the desire—the will—to become a new creation in the Crucified and Risen Christ.

Our motivation as Missionaries of the Precious Blood who profess a spirituality that seeks to draw all peoples near through the blood of the cross is to keep our focus on those on the margins—those who are “far off,” forsaken, and forgotten. As Pope Francis said in a homily a few years ago when he addressed several new cardinals, “We will not find the Lord unless we truly accept the marginalized! The Gospel of the marginalized is where our credibility is at stake, is discovered, and is revealed!”

How can we create communities of mission with those on the margins? To do this, we must have willing and able people—members and Companions—to dream together to find a way. The old saying, “Where’s there a will, there’s a way,” applies here. The way will open before us if we are willing to leave our comfort zones and embark on new ministries on the margins.

In 2009, I moved to Berkeley, California, and with Jim Sloan, David Matz, and Matt Link, sought to make Sonnino Mission House a community for mission with those on the margins. We were trying to reclaim one of the unique contributions of our founder Saint Gaspar, but also restoring what the members and Companions in the Province of the Pacific did in the early 1990s when they envisioned Sonnino as a place of prayer and refuge for those on the fringes of society and church. During the two years I lived there before being elected provincial in 2011, we offered a safe place for a variety of individuals and groups seeking to belong.

When we started talking about this vision, Jim Sloan was adamant that one group that needed to be included in the Mission House vision was priests. He reminded us of Gaspar’s mission to renew the diocesan

clergy. So, we had seasonal days of prayer for priests from the area who would gather at Sonnino for reflection, dialogue and a delicious lunch. We also had days of reflection, rest, and renewal for caregivers who were walking with family members suffering from mental illness. We offered opportunities for those on the front lines of ministry with the poor and homeless to step back for a day to breathe, reflect, and pray. And we offered several days of renewal for the LGBTQ community. Companions Maureen Lahiff and Gerry Downs also offered a ministry of reconciliation with divorced and separated couples seeking annulments. This is just one small example of how a group of members and Companions can dream and dialogue together to establish something new.

Dorothy Day was right when she called the “revolution of the heart” our “greatest challenge of the day” because nothing new will emerge in this New Creation unless we are willing to become new creations ourselves. That means we are open to being changed. I’m not talking about assignments alone. There will always be a need to help dioceses in parish ministry. But parish ministry is the call and responsibility of the diocesan priesthood. A diocesan priest who is a good friend of the community, grew up in a Precious Blood parish and is steeped in the spirituality, is often asked why he didn’t become a Precious Blood priest. His answer: “Geography.” He felt called to minister in his local community.

But we are not diocesan priests who live in community. We are missionaries of the Precious Blood who are called to be a New Creation in the crucified and risen Christ. Many years ago, I asked one of our missionaries what he thought were the most important characteristics of a Precious Blood missionary. This priest had spent time as a chaplain in World War II, a preacher on the Mission Band, and many years as a pastor. He thought for a moment and said, “Mobility and flexibility.” He took to heart the words of Saint Gaspar: “Unlike statues, missionaries are not motionless. They serve where God wills to call them.”

A fresh breeze is blowing in the community, so please open the windows of your soul and let the Spirit in. Allow the Holy Spirit to breathe upon us, renewing each one of us, and sparking that revolution of the

heart that starts with each member and Companion. If we open ourselves to the Spirit, her breath will kindle the fire that will renew the community, the church, and maybe even the face of the earth. ✠

Leadership, continued from page 3

*It is my Lent to break my Lent,
To eat when I would fast,
To know when slender strength is spent,
Take shelter from the blast.*

*When I would run with wind and rain
To sleep when I would watch.
It is my Lent to smile at pain
But not ignore its touch.*

*It is my Lent to listen well
When I would be alone,
To talk when I would rather dwell
In silence, turn from none*

*Who call on me, to try to see
That what is truly meant
Is not my choice. If Christ’s I’d be
It’s thus I’ll keep my Lent.*

“For Lent, 1966”
Madeleine L’Engle ✠





Companions and members at Companions Retreat in California

The Power of the Circle

by Vicky Otto, Precious Blood Companions Director

My first experience learning about the power of the circle came from the story of King Arthur. The legend tells us that King Arthur decided to build a round table for the knights, so that no one knight was over any other. Those who study symbols report that the symbol of the circle is found throughout the natural world. The circle has also been found throughout different faith traditions representing the divine symbol of wholeness. It has also been said that “because a circle has no beginning and no end, the agreement to connect in a circle allows energy to circulate from one person to the next, rather than being dissipated into the environment.”

This year, Companions across the country were able to experience the healing and powerful experiences of

the circle. Companions gathered across the country for their annual retreat, meeting in Missouri, Ohio, Iowa, Florida, and California to gather together for rest and growth. A retreat leader was picked who was able to attend all the retreats, so that Companions across the country heard the same information.

As we began the retreat process in 2018, we recognized that this year was different. As the Community was visioning and dreaming about becoming a New Creation it was apparent that Companions needed the opportunity to get to know each other on a deeper level as well. My hope was that if we could enter deeper into relationship, then dreaming and visioning would become easier and more comfortable. In support of the New Creation process, we also invited community

members to attend the retreat. Additionally, Fr. Dave Kelly and the staff of the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation agreed to lead the retreats because of their expertise in utilizing circles of reconciliation at the Center.

Describing the Companion retreats this year as different seems simplistic. While Companions gathered for prayer and reflection remained the same, the presentations were considerably different from what Companions experienced in the past. Rather than the traditional structure of retreats, participants listened to talks and then reflected upon them. The Companion retreats had shorter talks followed by Companions talking and listening to each other as they participated in the circle process. Companions reflected upon topics such as how are they fed spiritually, what values do we share, and how are we called to be a Precious Blood community in the world today. At the conclusion of the retreats many of the Companions commented that while they thought they knew the Companions in the area, they felt that they now knew them at a deeper level. Others appreciated that they talked with members of the community for the first time and really got to know them. Everyone felt that meeting Sr. Donna and Fr. Dave really brought the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation to life, which they had previously only read about in the newsletters. Everyone

also concurred that they truly embodied what it means to live Precious Blood spirituality, and that the sharing of their stories inspired them in their own journeys of faith.

Sitting in a circle. Sharing stories. Sharing hopes and dreams. Sharing challenges and difficulties. Sharing from a place of truth and vulnerability and supporting others in the circle along the way. These are just a few of the powerful functions of the circle process that Companions experienced over the last year. While each of the locations we traveled to had different Companions and circumstances, the same results occurred. The day began on Saturday with people a little hesitant and anxious and ended with greater compassion and care for people they thought they knew. It was evident that the energy flowed from one person to the other and became stronger and stronger. Taking the time to share our stories also helped Companions move forward in the New Creation process. As they began to recognize in their stories of today, they could also see their hopes and dreams for the future.

The poet Meir Carasso, in a work titled “The Same,” beautifully describes the experience of our weekends. He writes, “This is a time when doing is split off from knowing and being is hardly at all. But here and there

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Fr. Dave Kelly, C.P.P.S. and Companions and members at Companions Retreat in Ohio



Fr. Russel Friedrichsen, C.P.P.S.

by Fr. Mark Miller, C.P.P.S., Sacred Heart Church, Sedalia, Missouri

This is the second in a series of profiles of people who have had a significant impact on the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in the United States. These biographical sketches are of people nominated last fall as part of the Fair Inheritance Project. The suggestions came from members, Companions, and others.

You may recognize some of the more famous figures who are featured, but others will be less well known. This somewhat eclectic mix reminds us that it is not only the famous who have had an impact on the Missionaries and Companions of the Precious Blood in the United States. In their own often quiet way, “ordinary” people have also influenced us in a variety of ways.

As we engage in the New Creation process, it is particularly important to remember and give thanks for their legacy, recalling the words of Psalm 16: Pleasant places were measured out for me; fair to me indeed is my inheritance.

Everyone has heard of and perhaps has prayed the “Canticle of the Sun” by St. Francis of Assisi. In this canticle, Francis sees all of life as a brother or sister and thereby experiences a special relationship with all of life, regardless of whether it is human, animal, vegetarian, or ethereal. This is what offered the backdrop to the encyclical of Pope Francis entitled *Laudato Sí*.

Already in the second paragraph, Pope Francis beckons back to the command given to Adam and Eve in the garden to “have dominion over all that has been created.” How we have come to understand this “dominion” is somewhat questionable, but Pope Francis states that “we have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air, and in all forms of life.”

Before there was a *Laudato Sí*, there was a Fr. Russel Friedrichsen, who was convinced that doing injury to the earth was not simply an ecological issue but a moral issue. *The Clinton [Missouri] Eye*, February 3, 1977, published an interview with Fr. Russ, as he was affectionately known, in which he states: “I was an ecologist before it became a fad. In 1952, I was in Cleveland. We had Standard Oil and DuPont chemical—our parish was in the industrial valley of Cleveland—and there was a Standard Oil refinery that was putting out all kinds of fumes right next door. I can remember when the ladies of the parish had an ice cream social and one of the women was wearing a dress that completely disintegrated because it was a synthetic fabric.”

“Then I went to Valley Falls, Wisconsin. We had a paper mill that was polluting a river. So, I was leading the fight against this pollution of the Flambeau River and finally they put in a plant to re-process the resins which created the algae making the fish unfit to eat.”

“When I came to Germantown, Missouri and saw the coal mining, it was a natural thing for me to become involved.”





One thing we must always keep in mind: Fr. Russ was not involved because of politics or because he wanted to make a name for himself. Ecology was not a matter of science; it was a moral issue. This becomes clear in one of his statements made at

the Capitol of Jefferson City, Missouri where he and seven other people appeared before the legislature. The chairman of that committee would not allow people to speak once he found out that they were not strip miners and therefore knew nothing about the issue. When Fr. Russ was introduced, he began by saying, "Mr. Chairman, I'm not a coal or strip miner, but neither are you. The essential quality of a law is justice and I think I know a little bit more about justice than you do." Fr. Russ spoke for about 45 minutes, summing up everything the other speakers would have said but were not allowed to.

In paragraph 11 of the encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis states: "(St.) Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology and take us to the heart of what it is to be human."

Fr. Russ understood this with every fabric of his life.

Fr. Russ was skilled in other areas in addition to irritating the legislature about ecological issues. Not only was he a dedicated pastor wherever he was assigned, but he also had a hobby that was not shared by many people. When he was in Germantown, he offered to teach boxing to anyone who wanted to get in the ring with him. I am not sure how many took him up on his offer, but one gentleman who was 6'3" and weighed around 210 decided to take him on. Before the first round was over, Fr. Russ landed a punch that knocked the man out. The man later said

that he was trying to hit Fr. Russ in the stomach, but Fr. Russ always called his stomach the "Milwaukee tumor." It doesn't get any better than that.

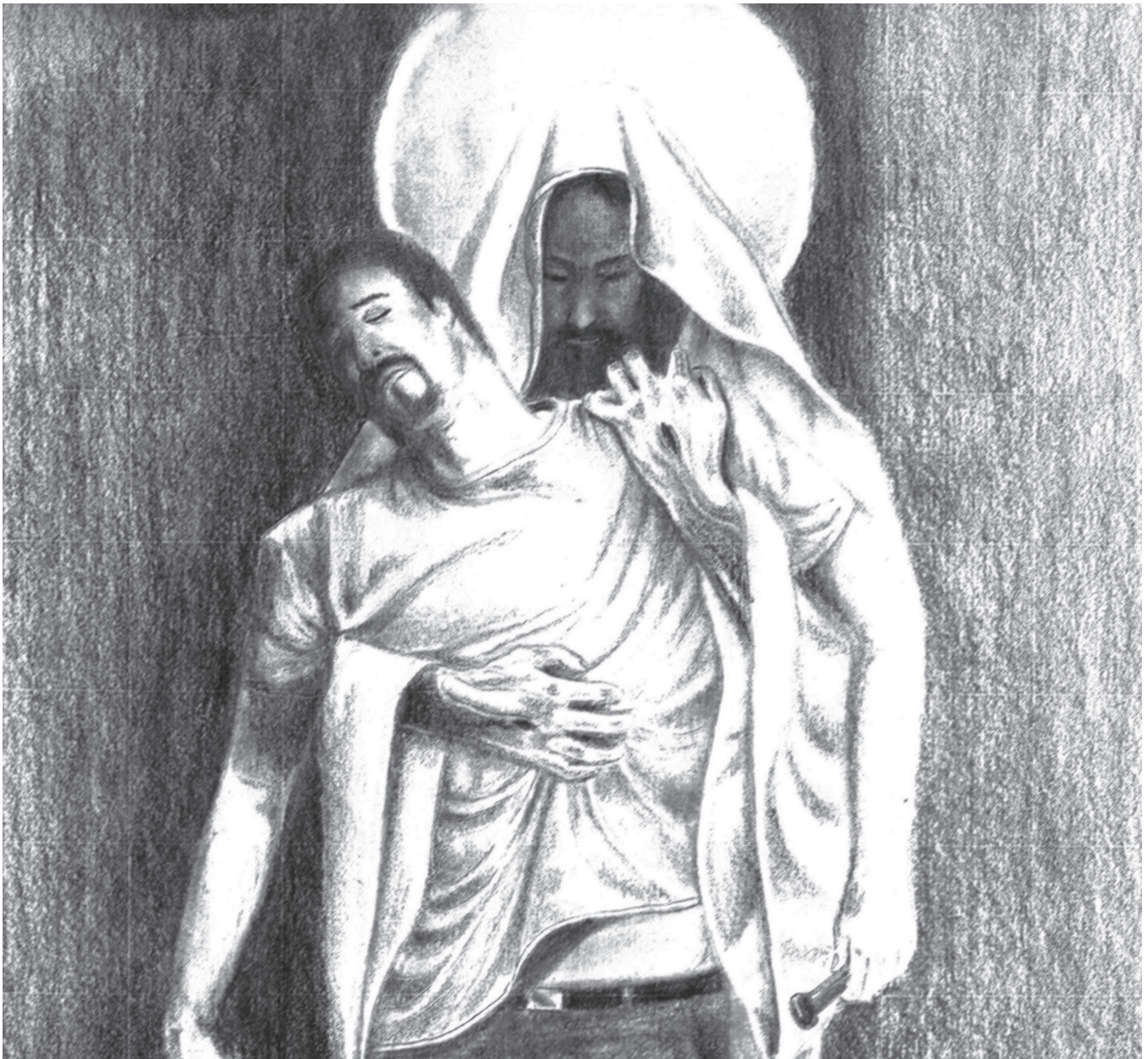
In the end, Fr. Russ had a great sense of humor, but it was tempered by a serious side that was guided by an understanding of our Catholic Social Teaching that drove him to respond to the various ways in which the care of the earth and air were being violated. He was passionate about ecological justice years before it became the widespread concern that it is today. ✠

Companions Retreats, continued from page 7



Sr. Donna Liette, c.p.p.s. and Companions & members at Companions Retreat in California

on this side of the horizon, people meet in sacred circles to form communities and speak their hearts that seek the same." I don't know if King Arthur wanted his knights to speak their hearts when he formed his round table, but I am grateful that Fr. Dave and Sr. Donna shared their experiences and led the retreats centered on the circle process. Throughout the year, Companions learned to speak their hearts, and our future as a community will be brighter because of it. ✠



Artwork from PBMR.org, Reaching Out from Within series. Drawing by Matt Sopron

Touching the Pain

by Fr. David Kelly, C.P.P.C., PBMR Director

Jesus was killed, says Richard Rohr, in a “collision of cross-purposes, conflicting interests, and half-truths, caught between the demands of an empire and the religious establishment of the day.”

The people of God are confronted similarly today as we strive to respond to the call of discipleship in a society and Church torn by one crisis after another. The moral authority of the Church has been weakened by the sexual abuse crisis and cover-up, but the need

for healing and reconciliation are real; the cries of the world still sound.

The cross becomes that location where all those struggles and sufferings collide. It is as if we are caught in the cross-hairs; exposed in a space that is conflicted, emotional, and without clear definition. But the promise is that if we are faithful and remain in that space, we will be changed (Resurrection); we will become a new creation.

Don't get me wrong, this is not an easy vocation; discipleship has its cost. In addition, it is counter intuitive. We, naturally, seek to distance ourselves from suffering and pain. And yet, as Christians—followers of Christ—we are the visible body (love) of God in the world today. We are called to be the compassion that is God (Rohr).

One of the greater compliments about PBMR is when we hear “there is something about this place that is so life giving.” People describe PBMR in a host of ways, but hospitality and warmth are always a part of their description. The art on the walls is part of it; the young and old that can be seen in the corridors and sitting around tables are part of it, too. But I think the thing that people walk away with is that we embrace the pain and suffering that is a part of life without letting it defeat us or cause us to retreat into ourselves.

As I write this article, the mothers are gathering in the next room. If you walk by you will hear their voices that carry a host of emotions. There is laughter and silent sobs in almost the same breath. The pain and the suffering of losing a child to homicide or to incarceration are very real—and, in that space, embraced. But in that collision of emotions, life bursts forth. They embrace the pain of one another, and because of it they are renewed and strengthened.

There are many barriers to making this journey. Mothers ride buses, negotiate work schedules and childcare responsibilities, and face a host of other challenges in order to gather for these few hours. While touching the woundedness is not easy, they have come to believe that unless they are willing to touch the pain, they will be overcome by it.

The Church could learn a thing or two from these mothers. While it is uncomfortable, we need to touch the woundedness—our own and others. For if we don't, if we are unwilling, the pain and woundedness will define us.

This past February 14th, a day celebrated to honor love between people, was also the one-year anniversary of the violent death of 14 students and three faculty of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas high school in Parkland Florida. Certainly, there have been other

shootings on high school campuses, but the Parkland students are remembered also because they did not allow the tragedy to define them but became the voice and the face of moral courage.

The Parkland shooting is remembered and mourned, vigils and memorials recalled that day and the lives of those lost, but also call us to a national dialogue.

Shelly Rambo calls it the Holy Saturday moment—standing in the wake of Good Friday and yet clinging to the hope of the resurrection. She challenges the church to not move too quickly from the trauma of Good Friday to the hosannas and alleluias of Easter. She cautions us not to gloss over the pain, as though it were not all that serious. Better to touch the pain, allow the wounds to breathe and to heal, as we look to the promise of a new creation.

The image of St. Gaspar with a mission cross in his hand should be the symbol that compels us to go to the margins in our own communities. Can we stand with those who have been excluded, accused, exploited, and abandoned and embrace the crucified Christ? If we do, if we stand in that place where emotions collide, we will be changed (resurrection) and become a new creation. ✝



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A Hole in the Head

by Fr. Alan Hartway, C.P.P.S., *Guardian Angels Church, Mead, Colorado*

One of my parishioners very thoughtfully gave me a gift of a 2019 calendar of Pope Francis, who is featured each month in some activity with lots of people. As I flipped through the months, I only had to get to February, where the photo really amused me. The pope had a hole in the middle of his forehead! His forehead wound up smack where the hole was punched to hang the calendar.

Apparently, the photographer, the layout editor, the proof reader, the die-press hole puncher, and probably several others on the way, all missed this, for I'm certain had any of them caught it, it would have been corrected immediately to make everything nice. But there he was, a hole in his head!

I must admit that my amusement was not just at the flub in calendar production. The pope has a hole in his head. We use that expression to identify someone who has "crazy" ideas or ways of doing things. Indeed, the pope in this sense has a hole in his head. He talks about grace and mercy all the time. It is quite outlandish, different, or even crazy to follow Jesus in our culture. He is not practical, he's a visionary and prophet, and he doesn't make us any money. Regarding our own charism, in light of our monetizing culture, one surely must have a hole in the head even to attempt living the gospel, witnessing to the gospel, or living the evangelical and apostolic life.

We surely must have a hole in our head to think we can make a difference in reconciliation, in the ministry of the Word, or in asking ourselves the question, "Who is not being served." In the grand scheme of things, we probably don't make that much of a difference, but the point is that we are enacting our charism and knowing that is enough.

The hole in the head image also suggests that, like all holes, something is broken and dangerous and must be fixed. The "fixing" mentality, when it comes to reconciliation is not the attitude or way to go. Fixing often means a patchwork cover-up and repair job. In the reign of God, all things are made new. This is perhaps the great challenge of the New Creation

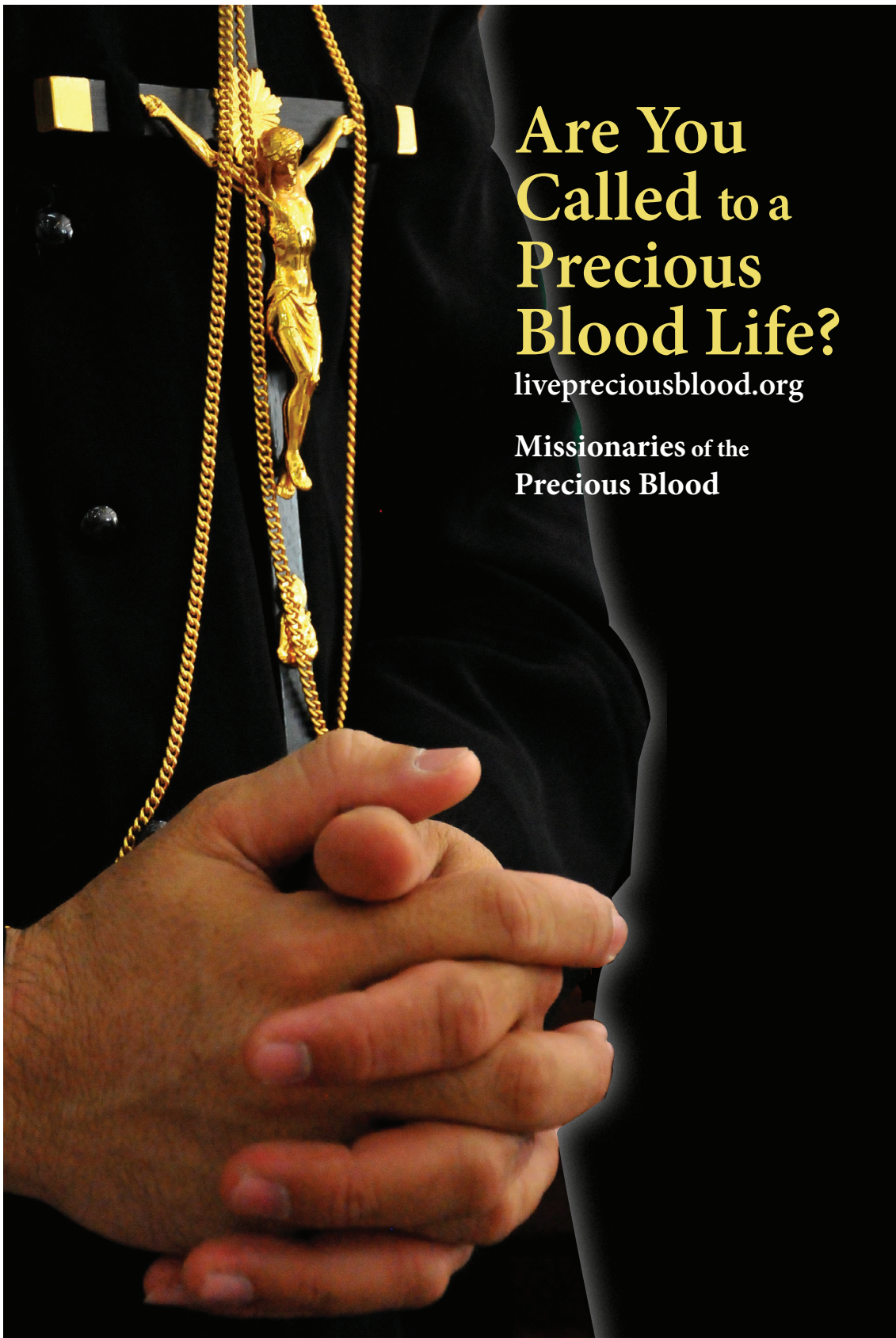
Commission—not to fix something, but to make something new. Everyone hopes this is a success. After all, holes also serve a purpose—like the means to hang a calendar—and holes are also wells from which deeper water can be drawn. Perhaps it is not a bad thing for us to have a hole in our heads.

A second thought arose from my smirking at the hole in the Pope's head. The calendar formatting was obviously not well shepherded through the whole publication process. Perhaps there were "too many cooks in the kitchen." I think it was because all these "specialists" had very poor communication among themselves to catch the boo-boo, a hole in the pope's head.

In academic work especially, I remember that everything had to be passed by one's departmental peers. Things were endlessly edited, but things also were almost always made better. Certainly, in pastoral ministries, everything is run by the staff, the pastoral, and the finance council. In this way more people are brought into the process from the inception, and this organically leads to more buy-in and end result participation. The temptation always seems to me just this: "Git 'er done" and "I know I'm right." I hope this is resisted.

The New Creation Commission it seems must especially focus on new and effective systems of communication. There's a lot of various experts among us but bringing that together may be the challenge in the creation of the best communication structures possible. If we don't or can't, then people will say we have a hole in our head and nowhere to hang our coat. It's all about collaboration, not something we've necessarily been trained in or live out.

At the end of the day, we may still be like the pope, and people will say "they have a hole in their heads." It may actually be a good thing, that we are attempting to live under the sway of God's reign. We may or may not be successful, but God will be. ✠



Are You Called to a Precious Blood Life?

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Precious Blood



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A portrait of Fr. Al Ebach, a man with grey hair, glasses, and a mustache, wearing a dark suit jacket and a white clerical collar. He is smiling and looking directly at the camera. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light brown.

*How Does God call you
to a Precious Blood life?*

“I thought I knew who I was as a Precious Blood person until I met the beautiful people on the Navajo Nation in New Mexico. They showed me Precious Blood life through their simplicity, gentleness, peacefulness and humility, attributes I hope to attain through God’s continual call to live fully in the Precious Blood, inspired by the many people who have graced my life.”

*Fr. Al Ebach, C.P.P.S.
Pastor, Church of the Annunciation
Kearney, Missouri*