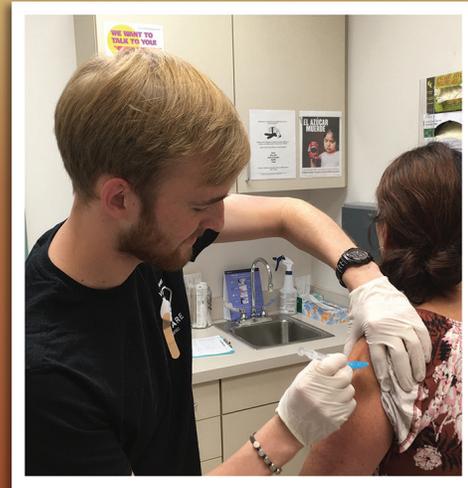


# THE New Wine PRESS

Volume 28 No. 3 • November 2019



**Grow in your faith.  
Build community.  
Walk with those who suffer.  
Seek reconciliation.**



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# THE New Wine PRESS

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*Front cover image: Icon of the Precious Blood of Jesus, created for the General Assembly*

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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## True or False?

by Fr. Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S., Editor

Let's begin with a test. Which of the following statements are true and which are false? (No checking with Google is allowed.)

- Some cats are allergic to humans.
- Queen Elizabeth II is a trained mechanic.
- *Tsundoku* is a Japanese word which means “the act of acquiring books and not reading them.”
- An estimated 1 million dogs in the U.S. have been named primary beneficiary in their owners' wills.
- If you adhere to the 45 mph speed limit on a stretch of Route 66 in New Mexico, the road's rumble strips will play a rendition of “America the Beautiful.”
- Before settling on the Seven Dwarfs we know today, Disney considered Chesty, Tubby, Burpy, Deafy, Hickey, Wheezy, and Awful.
- According to Toyota, the official plural of Prius is Prii.
- In Sweden it is illegal to name your child IKEA.
- Life is short and fragile. Almost everyone you meet is having a rough time, almost always in more pain than you think or know, doing the very best they can to get through this day.

So, how did you do? The answer, of course, is that all nine statements are true. But let's focus on the last statement—which you all checked as true, I hope. In a blog post I read some time ago, the writer commented in this way: “You don't have to save these people or fix them or give them any special treatment. They are rarely asking for such things. The thing these wounded and weary human beings most need from you as you share this space with them—is for you not be a jerk. It's really that simple.... They need you to *not* contribute to their grieving, *not* to compound their sadness, *not* to amplify their fear, *not* to add to their adversity.”

Maybe that's what Jesus was actually thinking when he said, “Woe also to you scholars of the law! You impose on people burdens hard to carry, but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them.” Or on another occasion when he said it more gently: “This is my commandment, that you love one another.” Sounds better than “Don't be a jerk.” Which brings me to one more statement that is true: Ten times more people are bitten by other people in New York annually, than are bitten by sharks worldwide. †

# Building Relationships

by Fr. David Matz, C.P.P.S., Provincial Council

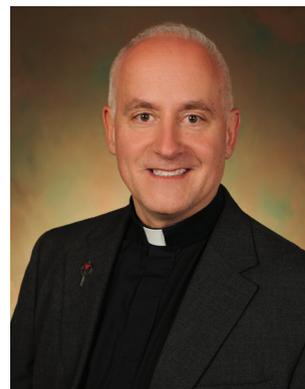
In preparation for the recent Feast of St. Gaspar on October 21, I was reading an article co-written by Fr. Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S. and Fr. Ray Cera, C.P.P.S. What moved me about the article was what was shared about Gaspar's time in exile. While Gaspar tried to preach and teach wherever he could, in exile he lived in the silence of the cell. And it was in that cell that he began to clearly define the devotion to the Precious Blood of Christ. His vision became clear that he would continue his works of mercy and evangelization in the context of community. He and Fr. Albertini discerned the foundational structure for the congregation of Missionaries that Gaspar founded in 1815. I know also that this time of solitude also left him close to death—until Albertini shared a prophesy with him about the founding of our community. This instilled new life and exuberance in Gaspar, which continued throughout his life.

I am fascinated about the exile and wonder if we, in the process of becoming a New Creation in the United States, need to let this in-between time—the process of moving beyond the identities of Kansas City Province and Cincinnati Province into a new reality of a United States Province—be for us that period of time that led Gaspar literally from death's door to the founding of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

Gaspar had no idea when he would be released. We have no idea when our new province will be born. We need to be present to what Gaspar and the spirit of Jesus are calling us to in our world. The gathering in St. Louis gave us direction for our future with five foci: Building Bridges, Empowering the Laity, Evangelization, Immigration, and Parish Ministry. We have a first draft of Common Statutes and there is even talk of creating a new logo. These are wonderful actions, but I am concerned with the building of relationships as well. One year ago, we reached out by telephone and began talking to members and Companions from other provinces. We invited members and Companions to attend each other's assemblies and retreats. Many people have taken the opportunities to cross those bridges. The New Creation is beginning.

Our temptation, however, is to rush the building of relationships and not speak about what makes us different. I wonder if we believe that approving statutes and electing a new council will alleviate the differences we have. Or could it prevent us from becoming a truly New Creation? Gaspar had to die to the pre-Napoleonic Church in order to rise to a new way of being

*continued on page 5*





*Participants at the General Assembly*

# A Foundation for the Future

*Fr. Garry Richmeier, C.P.P.S., Provincial Director*

Jesus advised his followers that a house needs to be built on a firm foundation if it is expected to last (Mt. 7:24). Building and inspecting foundations is generally not very exciting. Often, we would rather focus on all the imaginative and exciting things we can build and create on top of the foundation. But if we do not want our future plans and creations to come tumbling down around our ears, we would do well to periodically check the foundation to make sure it is strong and stable and will support what we want to do.

The 21<sup>st</sup> General Assembly of our congregation was about focusing on our foundations as a religious community. Leaders and elected delegates from every province, vicariate, and mission from around the world gathered in Poland in September to elect new international leadership. But before we looked at what we wanted to build for the future, we spent time reflecting on the foundation that would support that future.

Fr. Ben Berinti from the Cincinnati Province was asked to lead us in a process of identifying and prioritizing the core values upon which we base our actions, our choice of ministries, and the future direction of

the community. By definition, core values are very basic, familiar, and not really new. But revisiting them can help a community stay true to its purpose and mission while dealing with the complexities of life. Sometimes, depending on life circumstances, certain values take on more importance for a community. The community may then decide to adapt or tweak its plans or work. This is another reason for revisiting core values periodically.

The process used at the General Assembly was designed to help the group identify the three most important core values which we want to guide our community right now. Given the makeup of the group, including the various cultures and languages and the limited time frame, we were not able to reduce the list of many values down to three. Instead, we identified six core values that are especially important for us at this point. These are:

1. *Lives of conversion and renewal.* Through prayer, ongoing formation, and willingness to “move,” we are agents of renewal in our church and world.

2. *Living together in community and communion.* By living and working together, we exemplify what it means to be the one Body of Christ.
3. *Our mission to the margins of our Church and world.* Our joining with those who are forgotten, broken, or ostracized is core to our proclaiming the Good News as Missionaries of the Blood of Christ.
4. *Shared mission with Lay Associates and Congregations of Sisters.* Deepening relationships among the different parts of the Precious Blood Family enriches and strengthens us in our lives and our work.
5. *Commitment to the growth of the Congregation.* We renew our efforts to form relationships, especially through innovative methods of communication, which will invite others to join us.
6. *Spirit-led leaders to animate the community.* It is important to help people discern their gifts for leadership, and to provide opportunities for developing expertise in administration and pastoral planning.

The General Council plans to encourage each unit to devise specific strategies, structures, and activities that will reflect these crucial core values. The plan also will include periodic “progress reports” from each province in order to keep the focus on these values as guides for action.

Our Provincial Council will be discussing how we might enliven these core values more intentionally in how we live and work as a province. But even before that, I invite everyone to start reflecting on these values, identify how we have used them as a guide in our lives in the past, and discern how our lives as missionaries might speak these values even more clearly and more forcefully. This is our foundation. This is a big part of the bedrock of our lives as Missionaries of the Precious Blood. ✠

### *Leadership, continued from page 3*

Church in the post-Napoleonic Papal States. He did it. It's our turn now.

While talking recently with Fr. Steve Dos Santos and Br. Juan Acuña about the New Creation, the topic of the proposed statutes and the new logo began to worry me. I explained that approving statutes and electing a new council seems a bit too easy for me. We have yet to deal with the messiness of being in relationship with each other. Is moving into the New Creation as easy as approving statutes, developing a logo, and electing a new council? What happened to the process of developing relationships with each other? Our two provinces have some differing understandings of what it means to be in relationship with one another and with our Companions.

Steve affirmed my concern and added his recollection of a past Kansas City Provincial Assembly where we as a community worked on reflective listening—the art of listening to someone's story or perspective and then reflecting it back to the person as it was received. Of course, it might take a conversation between the sender and the receiver to understand what the original message meant. The point is being able to sit with another person in relationship, a one on one conversation, in order to understand who the person is and what they truly believe.

The three of us practiced reflective listening about the New Creation around the table at St. Agnes. We recognized in those few moments the importance of this process. I challenge our provincial councils and the committee developing our joint assembly to allow time to practice reflective listening and time to share what we may be losing in the process of creating something new. We must have sufficient time to move beyond past ways of understanding community, so that we may see the new and exuberant life of the New Creation that is possible. We must navigate the solitude, the exile, and our relationships together. Now more than ever, we pray: St. Gaspar, take us to the edge and let us fly beyond the confines of our minds into a new heaven, a new earth, our New Creation. ✠



*Mass during the General Assembly*

## Living Chalice

*by Fr. Ron Will, C.P.P.S.*

To the Kansas City Province Members: thank you for sending me as a delegate to the General Assembly in Poland for three weeks in September. When I was elected as a delegate, I initially felt reluctant to go. Then I thought something like “somebody’s got to do it, so I guess I’m willing.”

But now I am so glad that I went. After being part of this international family for three weeks, I have been given a whole new awareness and appreciation of our Precious Blood Community. Perhaps it’s something like going to a family reunion where I meet all kinds of cousins for the first time, and afterward feel part of a bigger family. I am thankful for the awareness of how large our Precious Blood influence is in the world. There were forty-one participants from fifteen different units of our Congregation in attendance.

Fr. Ben Berinti from the Cincinnati Province facilitated a process that was more like a retreat than a business meeting. It included daily *lectio divina*,

small group sharing, and large group sharing. It was a very good experience for me, and it led to prayerful selection of a new Moderator General and new General Council who will serve us for the next six years. They are Fr. Emanuele Lupi from the Italian Province, Fr. Angelo Anthony from the Cincinnati Province, Fr. Augusto Menichelli from the Atlantic Province, Br. Juan Acuña from the Cincinnati Province, and Fr. Alois Schlachter from the Teutonic Province. I believe that they will make a very good team because their different gifts will complement each other.

Week One was dedicated to: “What is the current life of the worldwide congregation,” with a desire to discover how God is calling each of us to become new wine as we explore the present life of our worldwide congregation and dream about our bold future. The week included reports by the Moderator General and each of the units on how they have been striving to live the vision set by the General Assembly six years ago.

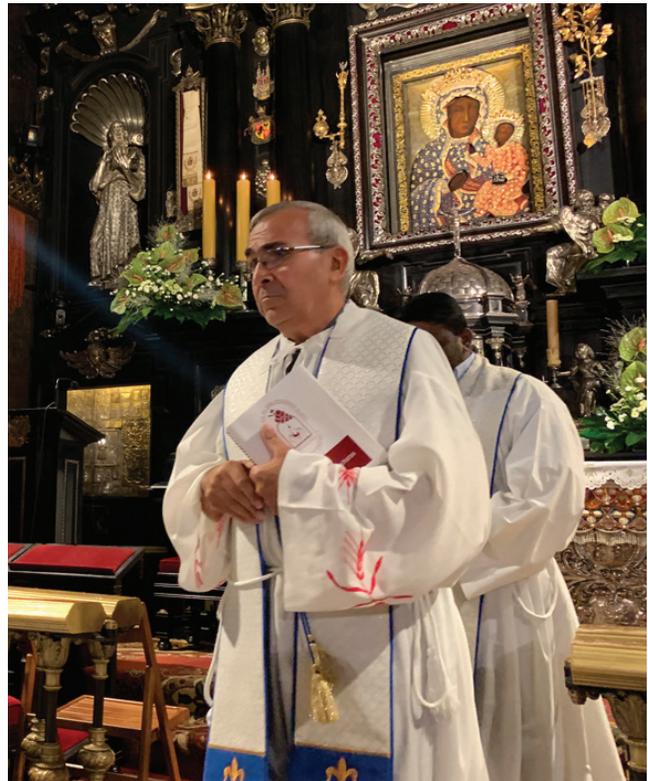
Week Two was dedicated to: “Articulate what needs our attention and who do we need in leadership to equip us to become new wine for a bold future?” We articulated our core values, critical concerns, and apostolic preferences at this time.

Week Three was dedicated to: “Create new wineskins from which we will drink deeply in faith the new wine of our charism and mission for the next six years.”

During the second week, Fr. Ben gave presentations and led us in discussions and personal reflection times about how we are “Living Chalices,” individually and communally. The chalice is a symbol that many of us carry on lapel pins, on shirts, on stationery, on our websites. It’s not something we put on the shelf. We are living chalices. A living chalice is anointed, it’s open to receive, and it’s used to pour out.

“I am anointed.” I have a strong awareness that I am a beloved son of God. The Eucharistic chalice is no ordinary drinking cup. Even before it receives the sacred, it must be prepared. It receives a blessing to mark its purpose; it is anointed. “Anointed” means it is set aside, called to a special purpose. To be a living chalice we must recognize that we are anointed, that we are blessed by God, called by God. This is our identity. This is who we are in the eyes of God. Corporately, as Missionaries of the Precious Blood, we are anointed, set aside for a purpose that is different from another group.

“The chalice is open to receive.” It is open at the top, receptive, ready. It is asking for sharing, asking for content. It says, “Please put something in me, otherwise I am of no use.” To be open also means that it is vulnerable to every kind of wine. God pours a blend of joy and sorrow into us. We can’t easily separate these. To personalize this experience for me, I am open to receive. I am actively involved in continuing formation and education by regularly attending conferences and reading contemporary spiritual books. I regularly attend Mass when I am not presiding in order to learn and gain new insights from other priests. I engage in spiritual dialogues with some good friends. I present Marriage Encounter Weekends for others, but I am also filled with new insights about my own relationships on those weekends. I make directed



*Mass at Jasna Góra Monastery in Częstochowa, Poland.*

retreats and engage in contemplative prayer and regular journal writing.

These reflections during Week Two led to small group work to prepare for a straw ballot suggesting our next Moderator General.

“The Chalice is Poured Out—Emptied in Service.” The chalice is not always full of content. It must be poured out and emptied. But only so that it can be filled again and put into service. It is a continual cycle. If it stays full, or if it stays empty, it becomes an object on a shelf or a museum piece. The emptying invites God to fill it again. The chalice is just a container if it is not emptied in service. If our chalice is always full, there is no room to receive from God. Often our living chalice is full of many things and we can’t receive from God.

Because we are an international group, we had all our Masses and Liturgy of the Hours celebrated in a combination of English and Spanish. It was a very good experience of bilingual prayer for me. In addition to our retreat times, the Polish Province arranged sight-seeing trips to various locations in Poland,

*continued on page 9*

# New Wine or Old

by Vicky Otto, Precious Blood Companions Director

I lived in the San Francisco Bay area for many years. During the last few years I was there I had the opportunity to explore the vineyards and wineries in the Napa Valley and Sonoma Valley. I couldn't help but reminisce about these trips as I participated in the 21st General Assembly in Poland, whose theme was "Becoming New Wine."

The image that stuck with me throughout the three weeks—and continues to strike me—is new wine. The image from the Gospel of Luke about pouring new wine into old wineskins is familiar to us all. During our conversations and reflections at the General Assembly, Fr. Ben Berinti, C.P.P.S. encouraged us to remember that new wine is active. It is expanding and effervescent. The wine must go through many processes before it is considered finished, and it grows more intoxicating as it develops. We reflected upon the challenges of becoming new wine, recognizing that we first need to determine if we have a thirst for it. For some, there is comfort in the familiar. Old wine is stable and rich and familiar. There is comfort in staying in the same place, comfort in not having to drink something that will probably be much different than anything we have experienced in our lives.

What will it be for us, new wine or old wine? As we continue to move forward in the New Creation process, at times it feels like we are ready for new wine, and at other times we are happy with staying with the old. The challenge of new wine or old wine was evident as the delegates applauded the work of the lay associates in the congregation, but still harbored some anxiety regarding envisioning an expanded vision of the community that included lay associates for the future.

Throughout the New Creation process, with themes like those at the General Assembly about new wine, we too are continually challenged to ask the same question, old wine or new? As I have traveled across the country speaking with Companions, many are ready for the new wine. They are eager to step out and become partners in ministry with the members of the community. Companions have embraced Precious Blood spirituality



*Mario and Ana Maria Cordova, Francisco Ortiz, and Vicky Otto at the General Assembly*

in their lives, and it has become embodied in them. Through their words and their actions, they speak out about the Precious Blood of Jesus. While the last few years have been a time of significant growth and change for the Companion Movement, during my time in Poland I couldn't help but wonder if we as Companions are thirsty for this new wine. As the province changes, are we willing to embrace those changes? Are we ready to look at new ways to foster our relationships with the community?

This year we will be revisiting our vision statement *Gather, Send*. It will be time again to dream about what our hopes are for the Companion Movement, so it seems fitting that our congregation is discerning what it means to become new wine. As we dream and envision the future for Companions, we must each first ask ourselves if we are thirsty for this new wine. This thirst, this movement of the spirit will allow us not to be held bound by that tempting phrase of "this is the way we have always done it." Sometimes in organizations we get comfortable with the roles and functions that people fill.

I heard a song recently that encapsulates my hope for this time as we as Companions look to the future. The verse said, "I can't stay in the box that you made for me." It seems that it is time once again for Companions to examine this box. If we are thirsty for the new wine and the endless possibilities that are before us, we may need to make a new box or even not make another box at all.

*continued on page 9*

# Faith in Action

by Caitlin Caminade, Precious Blood Volunteer



*Caitlin Caminade*

Two months in, it seems I have found a new rhythm. Whereas in the first few days at Kansas City CARE Health Center, it felt like I was stepping onto a treadmill that is already set at a sprinting pace, now I feel as though I am in sync with the rest of the team. I am extremely grateful for the patience of my coworkers, as they trained me on how to use the electronic records system, taught me the lingo, and showed me how to care for our patients. Throughout all this, they have kindly reminded me that making mistakes is part of the process.

I was recently reminded of the purpose of this process by some readings at Mass. In the gospel of Luke, the disciples ask the Lord to increase their faith. A simple enough request, I thought, and one that I have pleaded before in the moments when I felt guilty for faltering so easily. I think it is an instinct to think that more of something will always fix the issue at hand. How often I have wished to be more steadfast, more consistent in prayer, and how rarely I have truly appreciated the gift of faith. Because through faith, no matter how small, God can still reveal the truth and work through me.

And what if you don't have more? At the clinic, this question is asked every day, figuratively speaking. After all, people come there in their hour of need, often quite aware of the socioeconomic systems that have made them vulnerable. This is where I must meet them.

However brief my encounter with the patient may be, I am right there beside them to face that with them. It's a moment of rawness and realness that never leaves me unaffected. And while it does take a toll, I hope I never get used to it or take it for granted. My

experience volunteering at the clinic has so far motivated me to think of healthcare as a ministry.

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, St. Francis of Assisi's feast day, I was reminded of the Peace Prayer (an old favorite of mine) that is often attributed to him, and I have taken a lot of strength from it. To be an instrument of peace in the face of so much hatred, injury, doubt, despair, darkness, sadness—a goal for the rest of my service year and beyond. And I have still so much to learn! About providing healthcare as a profession and as a business, about how to put my faith into action, about how to be a bold Christian witness. I ask for your continued prayers for us volunteers as we continue our year of service. ✠

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## *Chalices, continued from page 7*

including our own Precious Blood houses. It was a true and warm experience of Precious Blood hospitality.

The Statement from this Assembly with a Vision and six Core Values will set the tone and direction of the entire Precious Blood Community for the next six years. It will be the responsibility of each unit to implement and incorporate that Vision into our community lives as members and Companions. Each of us will be receiving a copy of this Statement soon. I hope that we will not just put it on the shelf but will discuss it among ourselves in small groups in our local areas.

Again thank you for allowing me to represent you at this General Assembly and to have this experience. ✠

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## *Wine, continued from page 8*

Even though I don't live in San Francisco anymore, because of those trips to the wineries I still appreciate good wines. Trying new wines from different wineries can be intimidating because you don't know what is going to be in the bottle that you open. Will it have the same flavors of wines you enjoy? Is it a corked wine that has gone bad? The most important lesson I learned from the wineries is that you must be willing to open the bottle. Saint Gaspar was thirsty and willing to be open to the new wine as he formed this congregation. Through his intercession, may each of us be willing to do the same. ✠

# From Thieves and Thugs to Sisters and Brothers

by Fr. Dave Kelly, C.P.P.S.

Famed comedian and actress Whoopi Goldberg in an interview by a magazine reporter was asked, “Who, alive today, would you most like to meet?” She responded, “Pope Francis. Cause he’s going with the original program.”

The original program is loving God and loving our neighbor with all our being; it is about separating the sin from the sinner, the demons from the one who carries unspeakable pain. It is about moving from judgement to understanding, from punishment to healing.

Throughout scripture we see Jesus confronting demons and illnesses. It always ends the same: the expulsion of the demons and curing those who suffer. Jesus separates the sin from the sinner. He focuses not on judgement or condemnation, but on expelling the demons, setting us free from that which holds us captive.

Fred, our mentor coordinator, works tirelessly to motivate and steer young people in a positive direction. He did hard time, over 25 years in prison. He had been given life but was resentenced when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that mandatory life sentences for juveniles were unconstitutional. Fred, who once was deemed unredeemable, today works to save lives.

Fred speaks with a gentle voice and wears an incredible smile. He speaks slowly and with great thought as he shares his story. Like others at PBMR who have spent time in prison, Fred’s presence overwhelms and overcomes the many stereotypes of those who have been in prison. Fred and others here at PBMR are accompanying those who are returning to our community hoping to find their place and be part of the solution.

Judgement gets in the way of understanding. It takes the oxygen out of the room.

A while back, a young man was shot and killed in the neighborhood. We knew him well. He was kind and about as polite as a kid could be. When the story was carried in the paper, it concluded with the condemnation, “He was gang involved.”

Our judgement blinds our ability to understand the complexity of a situation. We seek easy answers to something that is far more complicated and complex than what appears on the surface.

God wants to be liberated, not confined in the tiny compartments of judgement. God wants to burst forth in the lives of those he has created and be made flesh in us! Jesus sees the soul that bears the image and likeness of God. Of that, there are no exceptions. Yet, for us, sometimes it is hard to see.

There is a story told about St. Francis of Assisi and a wolf that was terrorizing the townspeople by preying on their livestock. The townspeople gathered with clubs and sticks to go out to kill the wolf. St. Francis intervened and said that he would go out to meet the wolf armed only with love. The townspeople were sure the wolf would eat Francis. But Francis simply considered the needs of both the wolf and the community. He discerned that the wolf was too old to hunt wild animals and just needed to eat, while the people needed safety for themselves and their animals. Francis proposed that the wolf be given food each day, and the wolf agreed to leave their sheep and chickens alone.

What happened was not so much that the wolf grew tame, but that the people themselves changed and went out to meet the wolf, not with knives and hatchets but with food and drink.

When we make room for one another’s stories and let go of judgments and stereotyping, we discover that we are the ones that begin to change. The labels of thieves and thugs become sisters and brothers and we get on with the original program. †



## Mary: An Interreligious Bridge Between Islam and Catholicism

by Dennis Coday, Programming Director, PBRC

In February this year, Pope Francis met in Abu Dhabi with the Egyptian Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, the grand imam of al-Azhar and a leading religious authority for many Sunni Muslims.

They signed a document of cooperation, pledging to work together to promote “human fraternity,” improve Christian-Muslim relations, and fight against extremism. Francis later instructed the local churches to extend these efforts.

Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago has taken a lead in fostering relations between Catholics and Muslims. He has said that the document signed by the pope and imam in February “is a sign of the good that is possible between Christians and...we are brothers and sisters of the one, true God and the document on fraternity serves as a bridge inviting us to cross over the murky water of prejudice and fear that separates us so that we may encounter one another in a spirit of openness, trust and friendship.”

Many Catholics are surprised to learn that Islam has a long tradition of reverence for Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Because of this shared devotion to Mary, Cardinal Cupich has called Mary “an interreligious bridge” for Christians and Muslims.

Cardinal Cupich recently wrote in *America* magazine: “Like Catholics, Muslims believe Mary to be pure, courageous and faithful. They also believe that she was free from sin. The Quran calls her an example for believers, a woman of truth, a sign for all peoples and chosen above all women.”

The cardinal also identified three steps to building interreligious bonds: establishing and nurturing dialogue, striving for cooperation in daily life, and working toward mutual understanding of one another’s beliefs and practices.

Recognizing that third step as something we could do, Precious Blood Renewal Center recently hosted a dinner and evening of sharing about Mary between Catholics and Muslims. The program, “Mother Mary in Islam and Catholicism,” was cosponsored with the Dialogue Institute of Kansas City.

About 60 people shared a supper of fine Turkish cuisine and then Catholic and Muslim scholars shared their traditions’ teachings and beliefs about Mary.

Michael Sanem, director of faith formation at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Kansas

*continued on page 12*

*Mary, continued from page 11*

City, Missouri, began the evening with the presentation “Divine Mother, Divine Mover: A Marian Spirituality of Pilgrimage,” which he said was “based on two things that we Catholics share with our Muslim brothers and sisters: that is, a love of Mary and a deep devotion to the sacred practice of pilgrimage.”

Mary, Sanem said, is the “mother of pilgrims,” the “mover of pilgrims” and the “model of pilgrims herself.”

Pilgrimages “are present in almost all cultures and religions,” he said. An essential element of the pilgrimage is that pilgrim is transformed, he said. “It’s not like taking a cruise.”

“In Catholicism, Mary plays a unique role as a Mother of Pilgrims,” he continued. “She consoles and protects us in our sacred wanderings, and she ‘gives birth’ to pilgrimage sites with her apparitions.”

Sanem used Dante’s “Divine Comedy,” a long narrative poem that recounts the 14th century Italian poet’s allegorical journey through hell, purgatory, and heaven, as an example of the role Mary plays in a pilgrim’s journey. Mary’s intervention with God out of loving concern for Dante’s salvation enable the poet to make his pilgrimage, Sanem said.

“This is a good way to understand the Catholic view of Mary,” he said. “She moves us. She is the mediatrix of Christ’s graces. Not the mediator, but the mediatrix, assisting Christ.”

The last part of Sanem’s presentation used scripture and tradition to talk about how Mary’s life itself was a pilgrimage. “From unwed, pregnant teenager, to woman giving birth in a stable, to refugee seeking asylum in Egypt, to a widow witnessing her beloved son be crucified, her life displays a radical trust in God and a willingness to move and move others through God’s mysterious plan of salvation.”

This was a good transition to the other two presentations that night.

Dr. Sofia Khan, a local physician and mother of five, gave an overview of Mary’s story as told in the

Quran and focused on two lessons to draw from Mary’s story.

Khan noted that Mary, or Maryam as she is known in Arabic, is the only woman named in the Quran and that an entire “sura” is dedicated to Mary. (A sura is a chapter in the Quran.) The Quran upholds Mary as an exemplary believer: she is pious and devote, she listens to God’s messengers, and follows their instructions even if she doesn’t total understand. She always speaks the truth.

The Quran account resembles the accounts found in the Christian Testaments: Mary was born into a pious family; her parents were old, her mother barren; she conceives through the power of God, and she gives birth to Jesus.

The first lesson to draw from Mary’s story, according to Khan, is this miraculous birth. The story teaches us, she said, that “when God wants something, God only has to say ‘Be’ and it is.” The story, she said teaches us the power of God.

The second lesson Mary teaches us, Khan said is to have belief in the compassion of God. In the Quran’s telling of Mary’s story, there is no Bethlehem and no Joseph; Mary is all alone. She flees into the desert where she wanders in exile, afraid of the judgement of her neighbors and the shame her pregnancy would bring to her family.

Khan quoted the Quran as Mary, in labor under a palm tree, laments, “Would that I had died before this and was a thing forgotten, utterly forgotten!” But God has not abandoned her. She hears a voice—whether the voice is an angel or of her yet unborn child is disputed by scholars—that directs her to a stream for water and dates for nourishment. She is saved from despair.

Khan said the lesson to learn is that God never abandons us.

The third speaker that evening was Uma Geyik, a high school chemistry teacher who has lived in Kansas City, Missouri for two years with her husband and two children. In her presentation, “Lessons from Mary for Today,” Geyik drew an analogy between the

persecution of mothers and children in Turkey today to the hardships and social ostracization endured by Mary and her Son.

Geyik told of the nearly 77,000 people arrested in Turkey since 2016 because they were followers of the cleric Fethullah Gülen, who has lived in self-imposed exile in the U.S. since 1999. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has charged Gulen followers with fomenting a coup.

According to Geyik, however, the jailed people were members of social movements and worked in civil society to further peacemaking and democracy in Turkish society. They are teachers, doctors, and journalists, she said. "They are peacemakers who have been labeled as terrorists."

Many are imprisoned without ever standing trial. Among the prisoners are pregnant woman. Geyik,

citing statistics from the advocacy group Advocates of Silenced Turkey, said that since the 2016 crackdown, 864 babies have been born to prisoners and continue to live with their mothers in prisons throughout Turkey.

She said social media campaigns by Advocates of Silenced Turkey have resulted in some of the women and babies being released. "We need to be the voices of silenced women," Geyik said. "I am here tonight to be their voice."

"We see Mary as an archetype," Geyik said. Mary was oppressed, silenced, and ostracized, but God did not abandon her. Geyik said her dream is that the story of the oppression of Mary "will change the hearts of the tyrants...and the imprisonment of people and babies will stop."

"I am here as a mother. I feel helpless. I cannot do anything but make people aware," Geyik said.

## What About the Differences?

Muslims and Catholics can celebrate the similarities in practices and beliefs they share about Mary while at the same time acknowledging that our traditions also diverge on points of theology.

Fr. Francis X. Clooney, Jesuit scholar and professor of divinity at Harvard University, wrote a series of articles exploring Islam and the Quran to, in his words, help combat "dangerous ignorance" about another faith tradition.

His article on Mary noted many similarities between Catholic and Muslim devotions to Mary as well as the difference. He wrote: "I need not deny that other passages diverge further from Christian faith, *yet without disrespect for Mary and Jesus.*" (Emphasis is mine.)

Cardinal Cupich wrote about this, too, in his *America* article: "While contrasting ideas about Jesus have long been a dividing line between Christianity and Islam (Christians call him the Son of God, while Muslims call him a prophet), his mother Mary can more easily be seen as an interreligious bridge."

He quotes from "Nostra Aetate," the Second Vatican Council's document on the relationship between the Catholics and non-Christians, "which explicitly mentions Mary as a point of agreement between Catholics and Muslims: '[Muslims] also honor Mary, [Jesus'] Virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion.' "

Cardinal Cupich notes that Marian pilgrimage sites in Syria, Turkey, and Algeria, are visited by Christians and Muslims alike.

He also notes that in Lebanon, "a Muslim-majority country with a significant Christian minority, March 25 (the feast of the Annunciation) has been declared a national holiday. The idea originated with a Muslim, who also created the day's motto, 'Together around Mary, Our Lady.' "

Cardinal Cupich asks, "If Muslims and Christians in Lebanon can come together around 'Mary, Our Lady,' why can't we?" ✦

## Members in New Ministries: Br. Daryl Charron, C.P.P.S.

Brother Daryl Charron is back in the United States! After three years in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, he has moved to Chicago with a new assignment as Director of Initial Formation. Br. Daryl was also elected as third councilor on the Kansas City Provincial Council.

Br. Daryl says that the transition from Vietnam to Chicago has been quite challenging—it was a shock to go from hot and humid Ho Chi Minh City to the chilly windy air of Chicago. The cost of living in Vietnam was also lower than it is in Chicago. “I cannot get over the amount of gentrification that has happened in Hyde Park in Chicago since I last lived here 25 years ago. However, both cities have a similar hustle and bustle and an overabundance of traffic. Nevertheless, I found a little hide-a-way for some fun in the downtowns of both cities—the Saigon Opera House and the Chicago Cultural Center, my two favorite buildings for the celebration of the arts.”

Since arriving in Chicago, Br. Daryl has received new training from the Religious Formation Conference and the Institute for Religious Formation to refresh his skills as director of initial formation. He also has taken the time to explore other part-time ministries in Chicago in hopes of introducing future Precious Blood candidates to varied ministry experiences. “I feel if I get engaged in such ministries, I can more easily promote them to my candidates in formation. Therefore, I have gotten involved in tutoring high school students at PBMR, working with immigrants at the food pantry at Casa Catalina, and doing hospital ministry at

University of Chicago Medical Center. I may also become a hospice volunteer at Mercy Hospital. I especially enjoy visiting with the cancer patients as they receive their chemotherapy.”



*Br. Daryl Charron, C.P.P.S.*

As for joining the Provincial Council for the Kansas City Province, “It really helped being a Mission Director for three years and attending Major Superior Meetings. Those experiences gave me a taste of making big decisions on behalf of the community. The new leadership team is off to a good start in working together and it feels like our personalities are meshing. We are building stronger working relationships with each other the more we meet.” Br. Daryl also thinks that an important focus for the Kansas City Province as it looks at new and changing ministries as part of the New Creation, is to continue working on community life. “Living in Mission Houses together, trying to build deeper relationships with each other, and praying and eating together more often are an important part of this. Living alone or maybe with one other person needs to be a thing of the past. We need to promote a life different than that. We need to show by example what that looks like to new people wanting to join our Congregation.” ✠