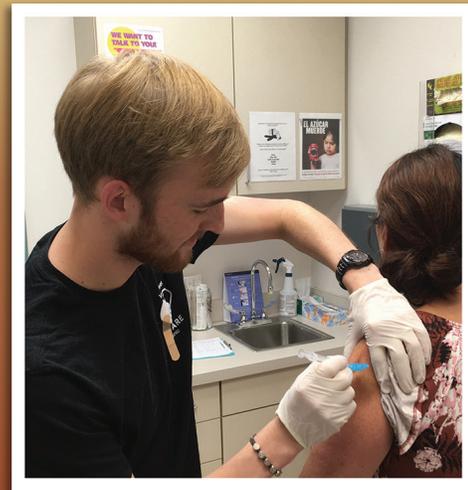


THE **New Wine** PRESS

Volume 29 No. 2 • October 2020



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



Precious Blood Volunteers
preciousbloodvolunteers.org

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Front cover photo: Br. Daryl Charron signing the Kansas City Province Corporate Stance against gun violence at the Provincial Assembly in 2013. Photo by Margaret Haik

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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Entering Into the Uncomfortable

by Margaret Haik, Director of Communications

Alex Gordon retired from the Kansas City Royals this past weekend. There was a lovely video tribute from past and current teammates and coaches, and the Royals made a special t-shirt for the public that says “Royal 4-ever” in honor of Gordo’s jersey number. He even had a nice throw-out to home from...

Oh, wait...you mean we can’t talk about baseball? I’d really rather do that. I don’t want to have an uncomfortable conversation. Can’t we stick to the simple, pleasant things—like baseball? Art? Music? Weather?

We are in the season of uncomfortable conversations. Actually, we’ve been in that season for a really long time. Some of our leaders have turned insults, victim blaming, denials, and lies into a grotesque art form. What used to be debates of policy have become more like the show “Survivor.”

This issue of the *New Wine Press* focuses on the New Creation and our national elections—both of which involve conversations that may sometimes be uncomfortable. I hope that this issue, along with the Provincial Council’s statment on voting (available at preciousbloodkc.org/voting) provides information and reminders of the values of the Precious Blood community that help our readers during any difficult discussions and decisions in the near future. As a Precious Blood community, we are called to show compassion to those in the margins. With the elections and the Becoming New Wine process, may we also be compassionate listeners to those who have different experiences and viewpoints from ourselves.

And if that fails...turn to baseball. ♣

Health and Well-being

by Br. Daryl Charron, C.P.P.S., Provincial Council

Fr. Bill Nordenbrock was the celebrant at a special Mass during which I renewed my promise of fidelity. I was able to share a reflection with my family after the homily. I let them know of the way St. Gaspar inspired me to go into hospital ministry by his constant visiting of the sick. Gaspar had a lot of health problems himself, which probably made him more empathetic with those who were ill. I admired this about our founder so much that it made me want to pursue healthcare ministry.

The past couple of months have allowed me to get back into ministry in a hospital. I got hired at a small Franciscan hospital in Dyer, Indiana. I was thrilled to find a chaplain job in a Catholic hospital with the help of Br. Brian Boyle who encouraged me to apply. I can tell already through my short time there how much they exude Catholic values. During my orientation I once again got to hear about “Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services.” Only this time it was the fifth edition. I liked the part where the priest giving the presentation quoted this directive, “Catholic health care has the responsibility to treat those in need in a way that respects the human dignity and eternal destiny of all.”

The words of Christ have provided inspiration for many hospital chaplains for many years when he said, “I was ill, and you cared for me” (Mt. 25:36). It still inspires me today. St. Gaspar’s words also inspire me in this regard. In letter 921, he had this to say to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, “I cannot express to you how moved I am whenever I visit the sick who always bring home to me another new example of human frailness.” I have similar sentiments after I have visited several patients. I especially feel the impact of Gaspar’s statement during this time of the pandemic when human frailty is evident.

St. Gaspar often felt deep sorrow about the conditions of his members’ health and always tried to keep informed about it. He encouraged them to take care of themselves and conserve their health for the glory of the Lord. He led them to believe they are to be custodians of their health so that they can do the will of God. My hope is that we as missionaries today can have such care and compassion for one another.

This past year I have had my fair share of health concerns. Fortunately, I have had good community support from those I live with here in San

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iStock photo.com

Who Are We Called To Be? Who Are We Becoming?

by Gabino Zavala, Director of Peace and Justice Ministry

When I tell people that I am a Precious Blood Companion, that bit of information raises a number of questions. Who are the Missionaries of the Precious Blood? What is their Charism? What is their Mission? What is a Precious Blood Companion? Why did you decide to become a Companion? This has challenged me to reflect on my covenant as a Companion and the spirituality of the Precious Blood Community. It challenges me to reflect honestly on how being a Precious Blood Companion has helped me to listen to God calling me to be a more committed witness to the Gospel, a disciple.

A committed witness to the Gospel promotes the dignity of the human person: the unborn, those

already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the forgotten, the vulnerable and the elderly, the rejected, migrants, those affected by racism and exclusion.

A committed witness to the Gospel advocates for the common good, for family and community, for the poor and vulnerable. As advocates for all life, from conception to natural death, we are also called to care for our common home. In other words, we are called to live out the works of mercy: to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to visit the sick and the imprisoned. As precious Blood members and Companions we are to strive to be women and men of forgiveness and merciful compassion.

While this is what we are called to be—women and men who take the Gospel seriously in their daily lives, who form their consciences and make their decisions based on Gospel values and Catholic Social Teachings, who strive for the common good, who don't say "What's in it for me?" but rather "How can I serve the least of my sisters and brothers?"—it is never easy.

As the elections near, we often approach the voting booth, not as members of the Precious Blood Family, as people who make every effort to live out the Gospel in our daily lives, but as Democrats and Republicans. We make voting decisions not with prayer, or a sincere study of the issues, or a profound reflection on these issues in light of our faith, but rather on partisan politics. We latch on to one issue that we feel is preeminent, rather than looking at a fuller picture. We vote the way the Bishop told us or on what Father said from the pulpit or in the bulletin, without being informed—and thus not from a deep conviction that comes from a well formed and informed conscience.

It is of great concern to me that bishops and priests so freely intimate to people that they should vote for one candidate over another to avoid committing a grave sin. They make veiled threats that it is sinful to vote in conscience for a certain candidate.

We know there is no political party and no candidate that espouses everything we hold dear—in our faith, in Scripture, and Catholic Social Teaching—especially in regards to the issues of life. We agree with Pope Francis that we must clearly, firmly, and passionately defend the unborn. But we also agree with Pope Francis that we must clearly, firmly, and passionately defend the sacred lives of those already born. This means that when children are separated from their parents and placed in cages we must raise our voices against these crimes, that when people are treated badly for illegally crossing our borders looking for a better life we not demonize them but treat them with dignity. This means that when undocumented women in the care of ICE are given hysterectomies without their consent, our pro-life voices should be raised

in outrage. If we are pro-life, it means that we raise our voices against the exclusion and mistreatment of others because of the color of their skin, their gender, or sexual preference. It means that we work to abolish the death penalty. It means that we decry the ill treatment of the vulnerable and elderly who are exposed to unwanted euthanasia. It means that we fight against the trafficking of any human being and other forms of modern day slavery.

At the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast on September 23, 2020 the NCPB Committee honored Attorney General William Barr with the Christifideles Laici Award. This award honors lay Catholics who promote the New Evangelization and the Church's mission in their life and work. The NCPB board member who introduced Barr praised him for his "integrity, honesty, and his sincere and wise counsel." The Archbishop who was the former Apostolic Nuncio wrote a letter praising the choice of Barr for promoting Gospel values.

President Trump made an appearance as well. He was introduced as "fiercely defending the culture of life" and "more than any other president ... has done so much more to embrace policies that reflect the moral teachings and objectives of our faith." The former Apostolic Nuncio also praised the president for valuing life from conception to natural death. Really? I remind you that beginning in July of this year, after a 20-year hiatus, President Trump and Attorney General Barr decided it was necessary to start executing Federal prisoners again. Not to mention the many other violations of the sacredness of human life. Our bishops and Catholic organizations don't always have a corner on truth.

We are living in very challenging and confusing times. More than 200,000 Americans have died due to COVID-19. Our lives have been turned upside down and inside out. Let's pause, pray, and study ALL the issues, reflect on the issues in light of our faith, and vote. Not as a politician, not as a Democrat or Republican, but as a member of the Precious Blood Community, a disciple of Jesus. ✠

The Fierce Urgency of Us

by Fr. Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S., Berkeley, California

The death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg unleashed a fierce debate about the timing of choosing her replacement that further revealed the deep divisions in the country and injected a high-octane fuel to the polarization, not only in the nation but also in the church. People are racing in opposite directions to advance and arrive at their preferred destination.

But rather than put the “pedal to the medal” to win a race or an argument, it might be wise to pull off the highway and park under a tree at a rest area and remember the story of a friendship that could get lost in the fast-paced racetrack of rhetoric.

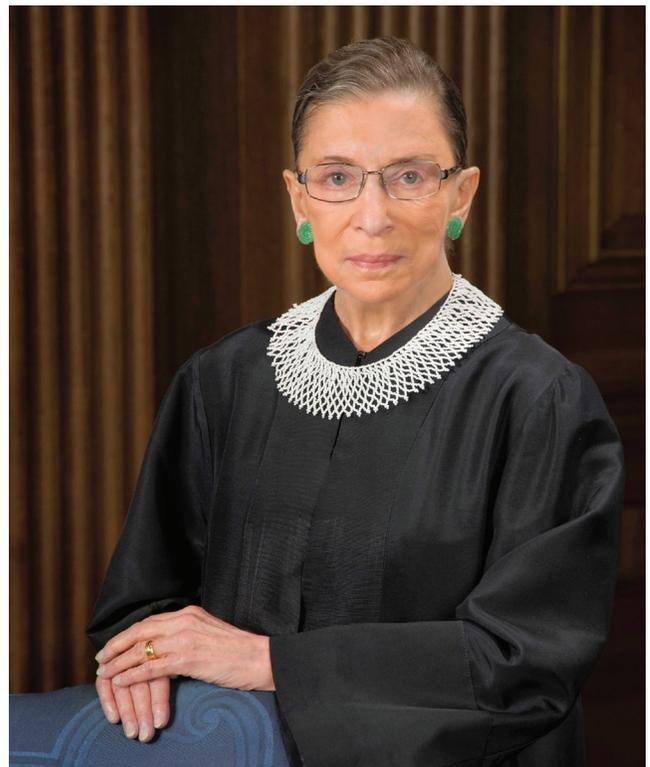
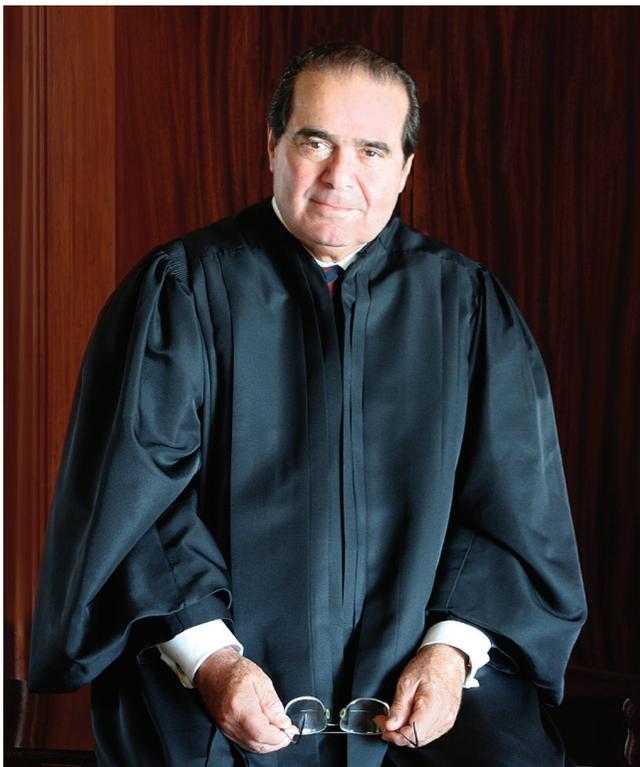
Though the friendship between Justice Ginsberg and Justice Antonin Scalia has been recounted often and even was turned into an opera—their mutual love of the opera was one of the bonds that drew them together despite their ideological differences—it bears remembering because it holds a key to a reality we profess as people dedicated to the spirituality

of the Precious Blood. Namely, the power of relationship inherent in recognizing the dignity of every human being.

One of the stories told on social media by Justice Scalia’s son, Christopher, following the death of Justice Ginsberg reflects the depth of relationship the two justices shared and reveals how the power of friendship transcends our differences. Judge Jeffrey Sutton, who was a clerk for Justice Scalia at the time, noticed two dozen roses on his desk with a card, “Happy Birthday, Ruth.” Sutton asked Scalia, “So, what good have all these roses done for you? Name one five-four case of any significance where you got Justice Ginsberg’s vote?”

Scalia answered, “Some things are more important than votes.”

Writing in the *New York Times* on September 22, Jennifer Senior alluded to this story and writes, “It’s hard to remember sometimes that political



disagreements, in the not-too-distant past, weren't necessarily cause to retreat into our respective corners, and that ideological differences weren't viewed as moral defects." She also reminded us that when these two justices on opposite ends of the ideological spectrum were nominated for the Supreme Court, Scalia was approved by a vote of 98-0 in 1986, and seven years later, Justice Ginsberg was approved 96-3.

It is deeply troubling when priests and bishops hold themselves up as harbingers of the truth and accuse people of being morally deficient by proclaiming that people of faith cannot vote in good conscience for a particular candidate. In doing so, they "widen their phylacteries" and become the scribes and Pharisees of our day that Jesus strongly condemned in his day. Jesus focused on the person, recognizing how each person he met, no matter how broken by illness or saturated by sin, was a child of God who demands our respect.

Our respect for life includes the child in the womb and the child separated from his parents at the border. Our respect for life includes the prisoner on death row and the victims and their families affected by violence. Our respect for life includes those who have lost their jobs and homes because of the pandemic and the homeless who are unable to work or find housing because of mental illness.

No political party espouses precisely the life issues that Catholic Social Teaching and the Scriptures proclaim, because the issues have become so politicized. The "seamless garment" sewed by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin is in tatters as people have been tearing at the frayed fabric for years.

When Congressman John Lewis died in July, the tributes poured in from around the world as politicians from both sides of the ideological spectrum admired his courage in standing up to the face of racism, injustice, and oppression. They knew what he had suffered for racial equality and justice for all. When President Barack Obama presented Congressman Lewis with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011, he said: "Generations from now, when parents teach their children what is meant by courage, the story of John Lewis will come to

mind—an American who knew that change could not wait for some other person or some other time; whose life is a lesson in the fierce urgency of now."

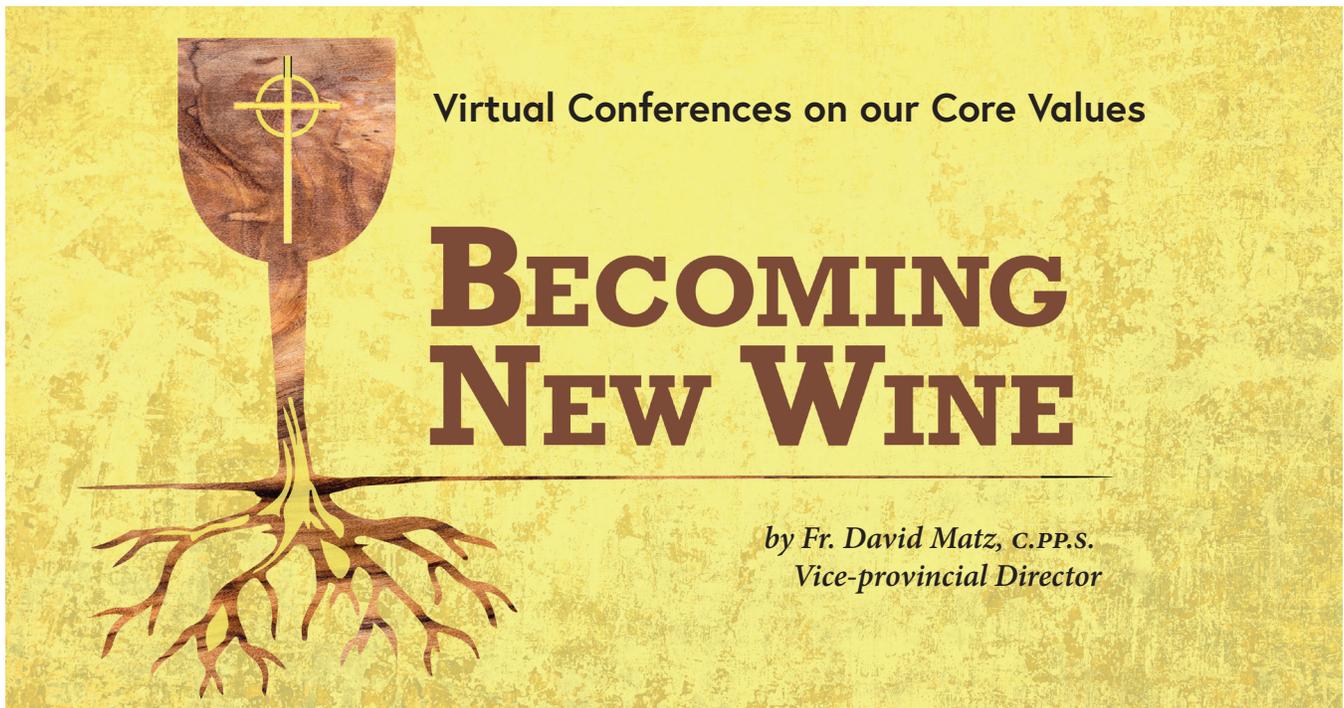
With the election looming, the polls prophesying, the pundits proclaiming, and the politicians promising whatever will win them the votes they need, regardless of how hypocritical it might be from what they promised four years ago, the pandemic continues to claim more than 200,000 lives in the United States. Yes, we live in very difficult, dangerous, and wearying times. As we race to protect or promote our own point of view, the polarization in our country, in our world, and in our church threatens to grow so wide that we can no longer see where the other is coming from. We are closing in on that bridge too far.

So, in these confusing and chaotic times, instead of racing in one direction or another to protect or promote our political position, may we pull off into a rest area, take a deep breath, and trust the inner spark of light and truth within that reminds us who we are: children of God. May we trust in the "fierce urgency of us"—that we are deeply connected as human beings. Though we may disagree on certain issues, the grace of relationship in the blood of Christ binds us together because, to paraphrase the Dalai Lama, our spirituality "is like going out to dinner with friends. Everyone may order something different, but everyone can still sit at the same table." ✠

Leadership, continued from page 3

Felice Formation House in Chicago. I can give witness to their compassionate care to the extent that Gaspar would be proud. Countless little ways of looking after one another really makes a difference. I for one really appreciate it.

Maybe we may want to consider having a focus on health and well-being as we look to our future of becoming one province. The Kansas City Province has a history of having a person or committee be in service to the members by promoting health and well-being. I found this to be helpful through the years. I believe St. Gaspar found this to be important. ✠



When two or three are gathered on Zoom, is Christ there? Of course, where two or three are gathered in the name of Christ, we know who is there, yes, even in virtual reality. I do not need to remind us of how the pandemic has changed the routine of our lives as missionaries—no physical gatherings, canceled retreats, and two canceled assemblies. Being quarantined, we are left with our imaginations to find creative ways to live our community's charisms of preaching the Word and working for renewal and reconciliation utilizing new virtual realities. In this context, you might be wondering where are we in the process of building toward the New Creation. Given that much of our work was to be accomplished at our Assembly, the joint Provincial Councils of Cincinnati and Kansas City are developing an online process to aid us in building relationships and discovering the core values which we would like to bring to building the New Creation of the United States Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

One year ago, elected missionaries and lay associates gathered in Poland for the 21st General Assembly, "Becoming New Wine." The assembly focused its work with the reaffirmation that we are a community devoted to the life-giving Blood of Christ and called to renew our charism in every season of our community's life in this world. As we all know from Christ, we

cannot put new wine in old wineskins, even though we tend to prefer the old and desire to stay with the tried and true. The old wineskins will inevitably burst. In that vein, the Assembly, before electing new international leadership, developed Core Values for our world-wide community with the hope that they would be embodied in our pastoral planning, that they would transform our Provinces and inspire us to become New Wine! In that same hope of becoming new wine, especially as we move toward becoming a new province, we need to take the time to discuss these Core Values. In the process, we hope we too can take ownership of them and possibly, given our specific cultural context, discover other core values that will lead us into the New Creation. Having enjoyed then the old wine, we drink of the new wine of the Core Values, so that we can place it in the New Wineskin of the new province.

"Becoming New Wine" will be an internet process using Zoom. We will begin the process on October 18th and be completed at our joint Assembly in June 2020. Each month for the next five months, there will be a video presentation given by councilors from both our provincial councils and then a small group discussion using the internet and Zoom. The goals of these discussions on these Core Values are two-fold: to build

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Province Corporate Stances and the Election

by Tim Deveney, Margaret Haik, and Fr. David Matz, C.P.P.S.

In 1998 the Kansas City Province voted to adopt a *Corporate Stance Against the Death Penalty*. We adopted this stance out of the belief that all life is sacred, even the lives of people who have committed the most horrendous crimes. The death penalty is the state committing murder on our behalf. This is unacceptable in a nation that has alternatives to securing each person's right to life and has the creativity out of love to find alternatives for justice than to kill another person.

We are people of reconciliation. Justice and mercy are key parts of reconciliation. Reconciliation cannot exist without them. Retributive actions by governments, such as the death penalty, are not justice. Taking another person's life, even when they have committed heinous crimes, is not merciful.

Voting is only one part of the democratic process. We must be continually asking our political leaders at the local, state, and federal levels to remove the death penalty from the sentencing outcomes for criminal cases. We should also be pressuring local prosecutors to not seek the death penalty even when it is legal for them to do so. Local prosecutors are the greatest determinant of the application of murder by the state. In 2019 Cuyahoga County, Ohio was responsible for almost 30% of the total death sentences in the entire United States.

Prosecutors who continue to use the death penalty as a tool should be pressured to stop its application and if they refuse candidates who do support abolition of the death penalty should be promoted.

State legislators and governors should also be pressured into abolishing the death penalty. 21 states have already outlawed it. These states represent different geographical and cultural areas and have governments that are controlled by different parties.

At the Federal level both parties have had differing levels of commitment to the death penalty. The Obama Administration did not allow any executions to move forward, but the Department of Justice during that time prosecuted and secured several death sentences.

The Trump Administration has executed several people, including two men in three days in September 2020.

<https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/facts-and-research/dpic-reports/dpic-year-end-reports/the-death-penalty-in-2019-year-end-report>

-by Tim Deveney, Volunteer Director

As you make your decisions about how to vote, I encourage you to reflect upon these words from the opening paragraph of the Kansas City Province's *Corporate Stance Against Gun Violence*, "Present laws making it possible for uncontrolled and unlimited access to weapons and ammunition of any amount and any type do not foster a culture of life. Local, state, and national legislators must pass reasonable laws that will curb the culture of violence tearing apart the fabric of our nation. The 'cry of the Blood' (Genesis 4:10) demands we do no less."

As I was looking at statistics, one struck me: nearly every person in the United States will know at least one victim of gun violence. I have my person, Terri Lamanno. She was a friend from church and mother of two of my students. She was murdered April 13, 2014 by a neo-Nazi in the parking lot of Village Shalom Nursing Home in Overland Park, Kansas. The CDC reports that almost 39,000 people died from gun violence in the U.S. in 2018 (<https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars>). Gun violence costs our country \$229 billion every year (Mark Follman, Julia Lurie, Jaeah Lee, and James West, "The True Cost of Gun Violence in America," *Mother Jones*, April 15, 2015, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/04/true-cost-of-gun-violence-in-america/>).

With 393 million guns in the U.S., there are more guns than people (Aaron Karp, "Estimating Global Civilian-Held Firearms Numbers," *Small Arms Survey*, June 2018, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-BP-Civilian-Firearms-Numbers.pdf>.) At what point is it enough? The second

continued on page 10

amendment allows for people to have guns for the purpose of a "well-regulated militia." This is not well-regulated...militia or otherwise. As people dedicated to a culture of life, I encourage everyone to explore sites that research gun violence in our country (everytown-research.org is a good place to start) and also look into your local and national candidates' stances on gun regulations.

- by Margaret Haik, Director of Communications

"Compelled by our charisms of reconciliation, hospitality and ministry of the Word for the renewal of the Church," we, missionaries of the Precious Blood, members and companions, we have a corporate stance the seeks for Immigration Reform! These are the words that challenge us again as we exercise our right to vote for political leadership. In the Gospel Jesus challenges us to welcome the stranger. "For I was a stranger and you welcomed me", Mt. 25:35. The United States Bishops in 2000 did the same in their document, "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us." Gaspar urges us not to abandon the poor, therefore our own corporate stance on immigration challenges us all to work for immigration reform. Some may believe that our system doesn't need reforming, yet in my own ministry in San Rafael and in Los Angeles, I have seen how violent and disruptive ice raids on factory workers and families in their own homes can be in their total disregard for the dignity and respect of the human person.

"Father, ICE broke into our home this morning looking for an undocumented person who didn't live with us. Instead, they arrested my mother and father!" Gilbert cried as he shared this horrendous news. And so, began an immigration odyssey that led Gilbert, "a Dreamer"—brought here as a child—and his sister who was born here and a U.S. citizen, to see their family separated by his parents' deportation. Gilbert led me, his pastor, into direct ministry and advocacy for the undocumented immigrant. Through accompanying him to immigration court, and watching this young man find his voice to tell his story to the great San Rafael community and the San Francisco Bay Area, he challenged me to see the defects in our immigration system and opened a path for me to become a voice of reform! Below I have cited the video of his

family's immigration journey. I was never so excited as that one day just before Sunday Mass, two years after their deportation, Gilbert's parent came around the corner of the entrance of the Church to announce their return to family and to their parish community.

I have many other stories and memories of advocacy for Immigration Reform. Gilbert and many other persons I have served led me to lead, speak, and work with my brothers and sisters, the Body of Christ, to let their voices tell the immigration story. Please take some time to look up the links I have offered to you. Both President Trump's and Vice President Joe Biden's stances on immigration are listed. Church documents on welcoming the stranger and informed voting as well as the American Immigration Council's website which offer us much information to make an informed vote this November.

Sam and Elida hugged me tightly and sang with praise: "We're home; ya estamos!" There is hope! Let us do our part!

The Province's Corporate Stances: <https://precious-bloodkc.org/peace-justice-ministries/>

Gilbert's Story: <https://vimeo.com/12434551>

Political stances

<https://joebiden.com/immigration/#>

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/immigration/>

Church documents

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/pastoral-care-migrants-refugees-travelers/welcoming-stranger-among-us-unity-diversity>

<https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship-part-one, #23-30>

Immigration Reform overview:

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/topics/immigration-reform>

- by Fr. David Matz, C.P.P.S., Vice-provincial Director ✠

PBRC: The Gospel & The Election

by Fr. Ron Will, C.P.P.S., PBRS Spiritual Director and Dennis Coday, PBRS Director of Engagement

During the spring and summer, as the pandemic spread from the coasts to middle America and the political season moved forward in fits and starts, Precious Blood Renewal Center decided to engage the Precious Blood community in a series of discussions focused on the Sunday Gospels for the weeks between Labor Day and Election Day.

Precious Blood people look to the Gospel to unearth the core values of Jesus, allow it to be the living word of God speaking to our lives today, and then discern how to make good choices in the voting booth, choices that are in tune with the values of Jesus.

We studied in September from Matthew's Gospel, a series of familiar parables: The Unmerciful Servant, The Workers in the Vineyard, and the Parable of the Two Sons.

In these gospels, Jesus begins by saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like ..." and then he tells a parable. The parables are about the way things work in God's kingdom. It's another way of saying "God's ways are not our ways." But it is also a way of saying that our ways should be like God's ways and that God's ways could be our ways. We look at a situation and ask, "Is it fair?" God looks at a situation and asks, "Is it just?"

The parables tell us that if we follow the example of Jesus, things can and will be different on earth. Jesus came to earth to reveal the unfolding of the kingdom of God on earth. We don't have to wait until we get to heaven to experience the kingdom of God.

As the weeks have progressed, we've found common core values repeating themselves, notably God's unfathomable generosity, incomprehensible mercy and infinite capacity to forgive. We can't help but notice, too, that most often the object of this generosity is the poor, the oppressed and the vulnerable.

If we are to be about building God's kingdom, then we must stretch our own capacities for

generosity, mercy and forgiveness to these same vulnerable people. We are coworkers with Jesus, unfolding the Kingdom of God in our midst on earth now, making the kingdom of God more and more obvious on earth. These parables challenge us to think about ways that we can do that.

Next we turned to this voting season to try to learn what the parables might have to say about our current situation.

Here's one example. The landowner of Matthew 20:1-16 pays the laborers, whether they worked a full day or less, one denarius. The denarius was enough money for the laborers to sustain their families for one day, and this is what he pays all the workers, the first and last hired. He paid a living wage. The landowner gave what was fair but also what was just.

So we ask ourselves today: What stands in the way of a worker earning one denarius, that is, a living wage? Today, that might be a lack of fair wages, a lack of family leave policies or lack of child care. These are felt especially acutely now, when for many going to work means leaving children at home alone.

If a core value of Jesus is a genuine concern for the dignity of the worker, we need to look for and support candidates and policies that promote work opportunities, just wages and just working conditions. We must ask: What policies will move us closer to God's ways and not just our self-interest.

Just labor practices are pro-life issues and they should be considered as we discern our election choices.

Looking back to the Bible, we see that under God's covenant with the Jews, care for orphans and widows was the responsibility of both the community and of families within the community. In fact, God's continued presence with his people depended upon how they cared for the poor and

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the oppressed. So as citizens, we must measure our choices as individuals, as a nation and as a global community on their impact on children and families.

Let's take a look at the Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32) as another example. The father asked his two sons to work in the field. The first refused, but later went to do the work. The second agreed to go but didn't.

One application to election season is obvious: Does a candidate make promises but has no action? Like the second son in the parable, does the candidate just say what the voters want to hear but takes no action? Or, like the first son, does the candidate exhibit that he or she is following their conscience in their various stances? Is it obvious that they have a conscience?

But this parable also has another important lesson for us, if we remember that it is directed at the elders and chief priests. They, unlike the sinners and lowly, did not heed the warnings of John the Baptist, they did not change their ways, and so missed the message of Jesus.

Is there a parallel to candidates who don't notice the changing attitudes and behaviors of their constituents about things like, for example, global warming, racism, how to contain the Corona virus, or how to care for our environment. They don't heed the warnings and so don't change their own beliefs or actions.

While people, especially the younger generations across our country, are listening and changing their behaviors, some candidates are digging in their heels more deeply. We must ask: Can they provide the leadership we need now?

The video series "The Discerning Voter: Gospel Values for This Election Season" is available on the Renewal Center website www.pbrenewalcenter.org. New videos are posted on Tuesdays until November. ✠

A Prayer For the Election

Gracious and loving God,

Let your spirit guide all candidates on the November ballot. Drawing on the resources of faith, we pray that each runs their campaign with civility,

Our nation faces many challenges at this time.

We need wise leadership on many levels, and we turn to you asking that you inspire us as voters to discern which candidates and policies will advance your vision for our human family to make the kingdom of God on Earth a greater reality.

Inspire each of us to use this opportunity to shape a society, more respectful of the dignity, life and rights of the human person, especially the poor and the vulnerable.

Amen.

Becoming New Wine, continued from page 6

relationships and to begin to discern concrete ways in which these Core Values can be manifested in the spirituality, the community life, and the mission of our new province.

The pandemic has thrust us into becoming the "Virtual Body of Christ in a Suffering World," which is a book by Christian theologian Deanna Thompson. Let us hope that as we build our new province over the internet, we understand that we can be more "there for each other" than in a physical place. This process of "Becoming New Wine" doesn't have distinct provincial boundaries, but will empower us to be part of a larger new reality, a New Creation of the Missionaries of the Blood of Christ. And all of that starting where two or three are gathering in Christ on Zoom. ✠

Building a Community of Hope

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

I just returned from a prayer service for a little girl—eight years old—who was shot and killed over the weekend. That the victim was only eight years old struck at the heart of all who gathered. Parents spoke of their own eight-year-old children and couldn't imagine such a thing happening to them.

But there was something else that made the prayer service particularly poignant: the crowd. Gatherers came from every walk of life—white, black, brown, little children and older adults. Young men nodded their heads in pain at the thought of this child being taken so early in life. Mothers and grandmothers wept; one teary-eyed young father embraced his little girl.

Those who gathered defied the rhetoric that fills the newsfeed; they contradicted the racially segregated Chicago as seen on TV screens. They crossed every line imaginable to stand together with the family who lost a child to gun violence. A young man who spoke repeatedly cried out “This should not happen! This should not happen!” until he was overcome with emotion. His words were strong and direct, filled with empathy, but not accusatory. He pled for forgiveness on behalf of a society that stands by as children are killed in the streets. He even prayed for forgiveness and change of heart for whoever was responsible for the death. Yet, he also called on whoever is responsible to turn themselves in to the police. “No more,” he said, “no more.”

It's ironic, perhaps, I don't know, but last month I wrote in this column “and how are the children?”

I know how hard it is to understand; I myself don't completely understand. But what I do know is that none of us can do it alone. I know, too, that we waste too much time blaming others. That violence occurs in our communities is not just about guns or gangs or lack of respect or poverty or inequities or racism. It is about all that and more. And until we grapple with those complexities and are willing to confront them head on, well...we'll be back on another block praying at the site of yet another dead child.

In 1994, the U.S. Bishops put out a pastoral letter entitled, “Confronting a Culture of Violence.” In the letter, they spoke of the pervasive impact of violence on all branches of society. They concluded with a simple statement, “We have an obligation to respond.” While that was over twenty-five years ago, that obligation still stands.

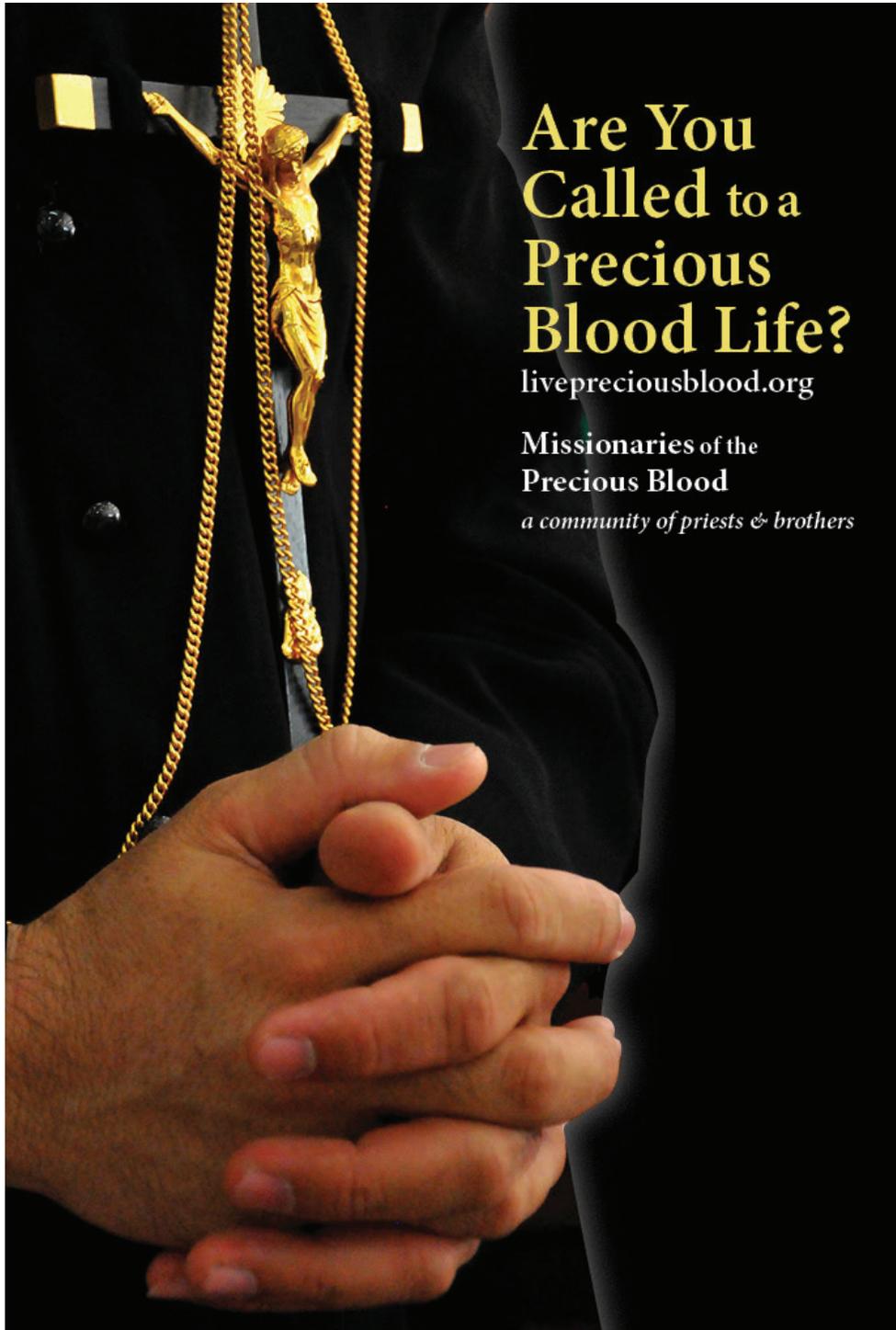
This year, we invited a group of men together and presented a challenge to respond to the needs and violence within our community: to stop talking and start doing. We call ourselves the Council of Men. The mission is to unify, encourage one another, and create positive change for the children and families in our community. The men comprising the group come from a variety of life-experiences, but they are all committed to making a difference by mentoring youth, accompanying youth to job interviews or school orientations, sitting with young people in circles of healing, and advocating for their needs. Equally important, they seek to hold our young people accountable for their actions without shaming or labeling them a menace to society. Their power is in their relationships—with one another and with the young people of the community.

PBMR is committed to building a community of hope, a community in which adults interact with youth and promise their presence and support in good times and in bad.

Edmund Burke said, that “the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men [sic] to do nothing.” No matter who we are or where we come from, let us not be content merely talking about the problems; let us engage and work to build a community where all young people are expected to succeed. †

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