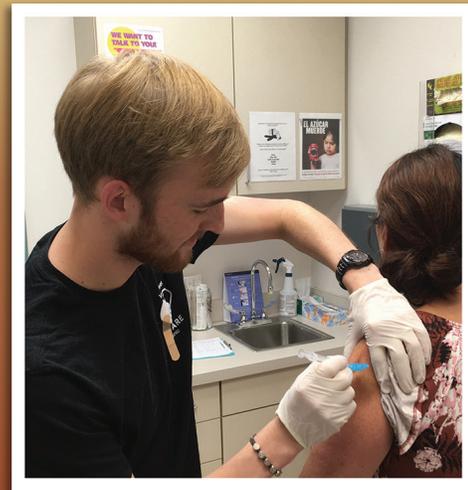




THE New Wine PRESS

Volume 29 No. 6 • February 2021

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



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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

Missionaries of the Precious Blood
Kansas City Province

Precious Blood Center
P.O. Box 339
Liberty, MO 64069-0339
816.781.4344
www.preciousbloodkc.org

Editor, Layout & Design
Margaret Haik
communications@preciousbloodkc.org

Copy Editor
Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.
rbayukcpps@mac.com

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Chaos Into Calm Reflection

by Margaret Haik, Director of Communications

I went to school in New Orleans and my husband is from there. When people say, “You must have loved Mardi Gras,” I hesitate for a moment. Mardi Gras in Louisiana has three varieties: Bourbon Street, Uptown, and the suburbs. Bourbon Street is generally what non-residents of the region think Mardi Gras is like. I hated that version. Too many people, too much alcohol, too many tourists. Uptown is where the city-dwellers celebrate and since there are plenty of college students thrown into the mix, it’s similar to the Bourbon Street version, just slightly calmer.

The suburban version of Mardi Gras is family oriented. My husband’s grandmother, Memaw, lived along the main parade route in Metairie and we would arrive at 7 a.m. for breakfast, then go watch a parade. There were tons of little kids in specially-made seats that bolt to the top of A-frame ladders so they can see the floats and bands. After one parade, we’d go back to Memaw’s house for lunch, then out to another parade. This would be the pattern for the day. The older folks would hang out at the house and play penny-ante poker and watch the littlest kids while they napped.

Lovely as that version of Mardi Gras is, my favorite part of the season was Ash Wednesday in Uptown New Orleans. “Favorite” might not be the correct word. Spiritual? Profound? I’m not sure, but here’s why it could be all those things: the city goes silent on Ash Wednesday. The tourists leave town, and residents who escaped the craziness of last four days of the season don’t return until Friday, generally.

If you were an alien dropped into Uptown on Ash Wednesday, you’d know something big had happened. The trees are dripping with plastic beads like a forest of rainbow colored weeping willows. But that visual contrasted with the quiet is the most amazing part. Following weeks of marching bands, people calling to the parade riders for beads, horns honking from cars stuck in the traffic, it is a cue for the quiet reflection needed during Lent.

Some of the articles for this month were written in the immediate aftermath of the January 6th insurrection. A week later, all was calm in the Capitol as the new administration was sworn in. The contrast of noise versus quiet reminds me a little of the contrast between Mardi Gras and Lent.

My prayer is that moving forward, we embrace a time of quiet reflection, both personally and as a nation. May this be a time to cleanse

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Lessons From Epiphany

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

Epiphany, January 6, 2021 will forever be remembered in history because of the shocking images that flooded our screens. On a day when we Missionaries celebrate St. Gaspar's birthday and Christ's manifestation of his love to the world, we experienced an out-of-control mob and insurrectionist assault on the U.S. Capitol.

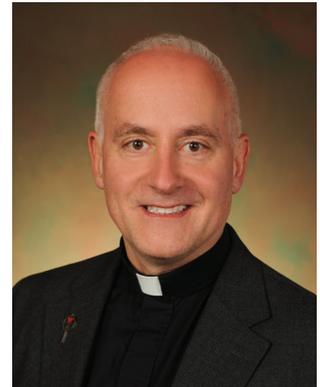
For twenty plus years, our community has gathered on Epiphany to mark our doors, asking Christ to bless our homes and all who enter them. This year, the 12th day of Christmas was marred by images of home-grown terrorists breaking down the doors and entering the windows of our Capitol on a death hunt for our nation's elected leaders.

I was most outraged when I saw the image of a flag bearing the name of Jesus carried by the insurrectionists, as if Jesus would condone this chaotic mob, fueled by lies and bearing deadly weapons, with the intent of overturning the legitimate election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. Sr. Christine Schenk, CSJ offered this reflection in the *National Catholic Reporter*: "I could barely take in that this was happening at the citadel of my country's democracy—let alone that the perpetrators would justify their violent behavior by invoking the name of the Prince of Peace.... I think it oddly providential—or perhaps synchronistic—that these horrific events occurred on the Feast of the Epiphany. An epiphany is a manifestation or an awakening. The deep-seated dysfunction—I would call it evil—plaguing our democracy in now plainly manifest. There is blessing in such an awakening, a painful clarity that will inform our choices in the days ahead."

Clearly, Jesus, whose ultimate commandment is to love, does not condone this horrific conduct. So, what are we to do in response to these acts of hate? On this day that began with violence, 34 of us gathered online to pray. We had originally planned the door blessing for our Epiphany celebration, but instead we began by reflecting on the day's events. We intended to forgo the blessing of the door until one of our Florida Companions mentioned the following prayer from our planned blessing:

O God, You send your light to those in gloom through your beloved Son—a gift to all the world's peoples. Continue to bless us, even when violent Herod lives on, when we avoid risk, and fear a journey like the Magi's.

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What Now?

by Fr. Pat Patterson, C.P.P.S. Cincinnati Province

How often have we heard that we are the strongest, the mightiest nation on earth? The richest nation on earth. That we are “the shining city on a hill.” One that fledgling democracies look to imitate, to find guidance and protection. And then came January the 6, 2021 when several thousand citizens stormed our nation’s capital with the seditious intention to overthrow the duly elected government. After six hours of skirmishes the police were able to restore order and Congress returned to continue the work they had begun earlier that day.

Reaction was swift. Immediately and throughout the day tweets and commentaries poured in. One of the tweets that caught my attention was that of Olympian gold medalist Simone Biles. She tweeted: “...embarrassed but not surprised...disgusted but not surprised...sad but not surprised...angry but not surprised...speechless but not surprised.” Yes, we had all these feelings and more. In a short communique the following day, president-elect Joseph Biden said, “We could see it coming.” There was no surprise.

In years to come books and books and books will be written to analyze how this happened, to investigate the words and actions and omissions that allowed this to take place. And another score of books will be written about how to make sure this doesn’t happen again, about how to strengthen our democracy, about how to make a more perfect union, a more solid and more unified nation.

Politics (and therefore governance) has come to be understood as service for the common good, a service that is born of, for and by the people. Governance (and therefore politics) is the power of service. When governance becomes anything else—the pursuit of an ideology, the pursuit of power, the pursuit of a personalized cult—then the halls of governance begin to fracture, the seeds of division take root, and the fragility of democracy is laid bare.

These days many in America feel betrayed. Fragile. Polarized. But many also feel challenged to find our way towards a more healthy, more solid democracy. A

democracy truly dedicated to serve the common good. I think the way forward is found in the word “service.” A servant needs above all to be humble. There you have it. Humility. Humility comes from the Latin *humus*—that rich black earth which allows (encourages) seed to take root, to grow, to bloom, to bear fruit. Humility then is not weakness, but rather strength, strength that promotes life.

Yes, we need truth, hope, transparency, trust, reconciliation—all these and much more. But without the rich, life-giving ground of humility there will always be a shade of distrust, a suspicion of secrecy. A humbled nation can accept the truth. A humble leader can inspire hope and trust. Together they can work towards reconciliation. Together they (we) can build a healthier democracy and a stronger nation, stronger in the power of service to the common good of all.

Despite his own personal demons, Abraham Lincoln called the nation to listen to its better angels. Living in a time of great national division and political fragility he showed us how to be a servant for the common good. As the Civil War was winding down, just one month before General Lee surrendered, Lincoln in his second inaugural address concluded with these words: “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.” Truly a model of humility in victory and of service for the good of all, especially those most needy.

Almost a century and a half later a new “servant” appeared on the world stage—Pope Francis. In the homily of his inaugural Mass, he said: “Let us never forget that authentic power is service.” Sometime later he encouraged: “If we can develop a truly humble attitude, we can change the world.”

To govern with a “truly humble attitude” in no way implies that there be a lack of accountability in front of

criminality. All crimes must be investigated, decisions must be taken, and the appropriate penalty applied. We are a nation of order governed by laws.

On Sunday, January 10th, 2021, Pope Francis, in reference to the violence at the U.S. Capitol a few days earlier, said: “I exhort the authorities of the State and the entire population to maintain a high sense of responsibility with the aim of calming souls, promoting national reconciliation and safeguarding the democratic values rooted in American society.”

This is a big challenge that Pope Francis has placed before us regarding the threats that have been aimed at the nation. It seems to me that there are two ways to respond to a threat. One is to feel intimidated, to cower in fear and to hide (or flee). In this case the threat (and those who level it) hold one paralyzed. The other way is to see the threat as a challenge, a call to respond and to overcome it. The threat/challenge that faces us today is perhaps the most serious since the Civil War. Our response must be equally serious. Along with the a challenge, Pope Francis also offers a possible response when he says “the authorities and the entire population” must work in cooperation in one common effort. That effort is to work together (“the authorities of the State and the entire population”) to promote the “United States of America, and (to) the Republic..., one Nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.” ✠

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Act through us to bring light to a dark world, and teach us your broad, welcoming inclusiveness for all your daughters and sons. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

The horrific images of the terrorists breaking down the doors and the beating and crushing of a Capitol Police officer in a doorway surrounded by the mob were a reminder of the evil and darkness that still prevails in our world. Through the voice of a Companion, we were moved as Missionaries to bless the doors of our homes, reminding us that God saves the people through the blood of Christ who dwells within our homes. Though there was violence and

hatred, threats on life, and loss of life on that day, we became signs of hope—open doors through which we walk in faith and help to rebuild our nation in this moment of anger and despair.

Later that night, following the Capitol riots, U.S. Representative Andy Kim spent almost two hours on his knees helping Capitol Police pick up debris on the floor of the Rotunda before returning to the congressional caucus to certify the presidential election. Kim’s response is a challenge to each of us: “We can kneel as humble servants to clean up the debris of fear and hatred. And we the people, all the people, can stand together in the long road of healing” (Fr. John Heagle and Sr. Fran Ferder, *National Catholic Reporter*).

In his video response to the riots, former governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger stated, “We are to put on a servant’s heart!” Indeed, we must kneel and pray for our country, our elected officials—including the previous president—our law enforcement, as well as those members of the militias and hate groups who blindly follow a false god. Additionally, we must be humble servants who kneel to clean up the debris of fear and hatred. We need to name our own complicity in these events. We must vote for and support leaders who honor the truth rather than promoting false narrative of fraudulent elections. We must hold accountable those people who desecrated our Capitol. And finally, as Precious Blood community we must organize inter-faith and interreligious networks to educate others on Christianity’s prime directive to “love one another.”

May this year’s Epiphany wake us up to who we are as Precious Blood people. May the Lord continue to bless us, even when violent Herod lives on. May the Lord bless us, even when we avoid risk and fear a journey like the Magi’s. May we bring God’s light to a dark world, and share a broad, welcoming inclusiveness for all God’s daughters and sons. ✠

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ourselves of the attitudes that create division. May it lead us all to a place of hope and peace as we move toward Easter. ✠

Spiritus Domini

by Vicky Otto, *Precious Blood Companions Director*

My mother and father had the daunting task of raising six girls in the turbulent 60s. I am grateful that they encouraged my sisters and me to be strong, independent women and to strive always to do things that gave us joy and offered us a sense of fulfillment. As a young adult, when I became active in the Church with the encouragement of the clergy, I completed the training to become a lector and eucharistic minister. I understood what my parents tried to teach us as children each time I served at Mass, because I felt a sense of purpose and fulfillment when I was serving the people of God.

Social media and the Catholic news outlets were abuzz on January 11, 2021, with the latest news of a change implemented by Pope Francis. In his apostolic letter, “Spiritus Domini,” the Pope modified Canon Law 230.1 to read that “Laypersons” rather than “Laymen” can be permanently assigned by means of the liturgical rites to the ministries of Lector and Acolyte. For many, this change may be puzzling because they see women serving in their parishes every weekend. Despite this common perception, there are still some dioceses where women are banned from these ministries. One example of why this ban is active is that some in leadership believe that women serving detracts from men considering the priesthood. I stand with many women across the country who serve in these ministries but are often reminded that this could be only “temporary” and that all lay ministers must stand aside if there are ordained members present. Lay ministers also recognize that while we have a strong desire to serve our brothers and sisters in faith in these ministries, our status could change based on the intent of those in episcopal leadership for our diocese.

Hearing this news and the gentle ribbing I received from my male colleagues in ministry poked at a sore spot for me. Like so many other women who serve in their parishes, I feel a call to serve in ministry, not for the accolades, but to serve the people of God. This sore spot for me rises because this decree again reminds the world that a woman’s place in the institutional Church is still precarious and slightly

tarnished even as the “priesthood of the faithful” is noted often in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. I long for the day in the institutional Church when the priesthood of the faithful is celebrated to the fullest, with no need to discuss the gender of those who serve in ministry.

A noted theologian, Phyllis Zagano, helped remind me that there was a positive note to consider. She wrote, “Here we have the Holy Father putting into law that women can be inside the sanctuary, women can be near the sacred, women are equally human.” Her remarks reminded me that to be treated equally human is one of the gifts that many Companions and I have received from the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. I often share with people that this was one of the reasons why I became a Companion. I feel blessed that the Congregation has always acknowledged the gifts that I have offered and has been willing to accept them to better the Community. I am grateful that the incorporated members of the Congregation have always displayed a willingness to collaborate in ministry with me as well as the Companions across the United States.

Our institutional Church continues to be polarized when it comes to the role of women in the Church, and may continue to be divided, even with this new mandate from Pope Francis. In 1815, Saint Gaspar established the Missionaries of the Precious Blood to aid in reconciliation and renewal of the Church. He began over two hundred years ago in Italy to renew the Church for entirely different reasons than would be present today, so I wonder what he would think about our Congregation today. My hope is that he would be pleased with the example that his descendants have created: to continue a community rooted in Precious Blood spirituality that honors everyone no matter their gender. Each day that the Community fosters this welcome and willingness to collaborate with laywomen and men, it gives me great hope for our Congregation as well as the example that we can set for the Church. ✠

What A Strange Year

by Dennis Coday, Precious Blood Renewal Center Director of Engagement

Can you run a renewal and spirituality center in cyberspace?

That was the challenge the staff of Precious Blood Renewal Center in Liberty, Missouri faced 10 months ago. When we shut down programming in mid-March last year, we thought the closure would last a couple months at most.

By April we knew it would be much longer before we could offer in-person programming, but we also knew that despite the hurdles we needed to serve our community in some way.

Over the months, we have developed a number of online offerings produced by Center staff.

Kathy Keary, a Precious Blood Companion and Spiritual Director, writes a weekly column, “The Contemplative Life,” that explores how to incorporate contemplative practices in one’s daily life.

“Contemplative living is a way of being in the world that speaks to my heart. I sense God calling me to share this spirituality with others,” says Kathy. “I consider it a privilege to have access to an ever-growing platform where I can encourage sustained intimacy with God that propels one into the world as a bearer of peace, justice and love.”

Lucia Ferrara, Director of Hospitality, writes a bi-weekly column called “Family Matters” that explores how to nurture resilient families, combining her practical experience and scholarship from the Search Institute, a Minnesota-based organization that researches and promotes positive youth development.

Much to our surprise, videos and videoconferencing have become key to our work.

Fr. Ron Will and Kathy use Zoom for spiritual direction. They plan to lead a stay-at-home directed retreat April 9-11. Retreatants will be in their homes and have communal prayer over Zoom and individual meetings with Fr. Ron and Kathy by phone or Zoom.

Videoconferencing has allowed us to take our regular programming—like Advent and Lenten meditations or study groups on racism and prayer—and offer them to a much wider audience.

Lucia launched a “Cooking and Spirituality” video series (available on our website and our YouTube Channel). “I am so excited about the series,” she said. “I have dreamed of doing this and the opportunity finally came up during the lockdown of the pandemic.”

For a few years, Fr. Garry Richmeier has been leading study groups on Thomas Merton’s spirituality that have been well attended. This January when we took the course online, we had 27 registrants, and they “Zoom-ed” in from California, Chicago, Florida, southern Missouri and of course Liberty, Missouri.

We have long hosted an evening of Taizé-style prayer, which combines scripture, chanting, and silence for a meditative experience, on the first Thursday of the month. A rotating handful of people would join us in the Center Chapel. Now when we post the video to YouTube, we have several dozen participants a month, including viewers from England and Vietnam.

But can a Zoom meeting be spiritual? Can a video prayer be uplifting?

Precious Blood Companion Gretchen Bailey of Oakland, California, thinks so. She has joined several of our Zoom programs and watches Fr. Ron’s video meditations and the Taizé prayer.

Some people say they really don’t like using Zoom, says Gretchen. “I understand. I have had difficulty with various devices, ID numbers, etc. But look at Zoom as a barrier that must be overcome so that you can achieve Community, share your faith, and even more importantly, listen.”

“Who says you cannot practice your faith across a screen. There is a veil between us and the next life,

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DE PROFUNDIS-A Reflection

by Fr. Bill Hubmann, C.P.P.S.

How do you pray when you are so angry that you cannot pray? How do you pray when the darkness overwhelms you? How do you pray when you feel like not even God is listening? “My tears have become my bread by night, by day, as I hear it said all day long: Where is your God?” Where are you God? Can’t you see what’s going on? Help!

Over the past year we have been made painfully aware of our nation’s and our world’s troubles: The pandemic’s 400,000 dead, systemic racism and inequality, economic crisis, looming environmental disaster, social unrest. At times we feel powerless. Is there no one who listens? Is there no one who cares? I am moved to tears. I’m moved to weep.

*Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice!
O let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleading.*

The ancient Hebrews believed that it was “tears that make the Messiah come down”. O how we need the Messiah to come down. So, let us weep.

In the beginning there was darkness, emptiness, chaos, storms, and turbulent waters everywhere. The darkness and the sea in the Creation story spoke to our ancestors in faith of meaninglessness, hopelessness, lawlessness, disorder, and sin. And so it seems today.

Have you ever wanted to just run away? Jonah did. He found himself deep in the belly of the beast. But God drew him out of the water into the light. He was called. He was saved. He was sent. The Prophet Habakkuk describes humanity in need of redemption: “like the fish of the sea, like creeping things without a ruler.” Jeremiah speaks of the time after the exile: “Look, I will send many fishermen...to catch them and bring them back” Jesus calls simple fishermen from their own tedium of mending and casting, mending and casting, and sends them out to “fish for others.” They are called to be like God, who as with a great net draws us out of the deep, out of the dark,

out of the chaos into God’s wonderful light and life. Called to a new way of being. Called to be like God, who draws us together.

If it is “tears that make the Messiah come down” today, then we must weep: “Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord. Come, cast your net over us and save us from the darkness, the turbulence. Bring us into your Holy Light. For this we hope, we wait, we pray.”

Help us also to be “fishers of others” to use the many gifts God has given us, that once called and sent we might help draw others out of the darkness into light.

Lord, fill us with you Spirit and make us priests, prophets, and leaders for this time, fishers for others and fishers for you. “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.” †

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yet we transcend it when we have the faith to pray and talk to God. Sometimes our own stubbornness is a barrier!” Gretchen says.

The online offerings have also proven very practical, according to Elaina of Liberty, who with her husband Mike joined the Merton group. “With two kids at home, if this program wasn’t on Zoom, Mike and I probably wouldn’t have been able to attend together.”

To mark World Day of the Sick on February 11, the Renewal Center will use Zoom for an ecumenical healing service led by Fr. Ron and the Rev. Kelly Isola, a Unity minister.

Later in February, Fr. Ron will use Zoom again to lead study sessions on Pope Francis’ latest encyclical, “Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship.” Written last year while the pope was in lockdown, it has been called “a blueprint for a world after coronavirus” and is “a powerful cry from the heart of a pastor” offering new paths to heal a broken world.

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Genuine Love

by Maggie Roth, Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation Intern

Before coming to Chicago, I lived in areas with socioeconomical privileges. During my first weeks here, I remember a sort of culture shock. I tried to wrap my mind around meeting a single mother who was trying to take care of her children, find childcare so she could work, pay bills, put food on the table, and keep the house together. My heart broke hearing about the fear people around me experience day to day, aware of the violence that surrounds them. As I became more aware of these challenges, I also started to see the beauty in the strength and vulnerability that people shared so freely every day.

Five months later, when asked to reflect on my time here, the first thing that comes to mind is genuine love. The love with which I see people treat one another and the love that connects with the hospitality, hope, and healing I've seen at PBMR is inspiring. This is clear as mothers and the youth introduce their friends and family members to the larger PBMR family. It has been a blessing to see how safe spaces make it possible for people to walk through life together, build relationships, and receive services to move forward.

In my time here, developing relationships has by far been my favorite part. The youth who come to the center often remind me of my siblings. We try different recipes making pizza, cookies, and pie. We spend time playing basketball, going to the lake, and getting into some deep conversations. I leave every conversation in awe of their perspective and insight. The first time we went to the lake, the guys were sharing their experiences with police. One mentioned he was willing to bet that at some point, the cops would stop us to make sure I wasn't being kidnapped. Another day, a group of us were sitting around the table and someone asked what my friends and I would talk about. It led to a conversation on how everyone was doing mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. As always, they surprised me with their answers and suggestions. Someone commented that a walk helped him when he's upset or stressed, and many mentioned music—two things that I can relate to.

“What would you do if someone you loved was murdered?” two young men asked casually one evening.

I had never considered this before, but it became clear they had thought about it for years. We talked about living in a way to honor the loved one, being there for family, and the pain of losing someone. We discussed violent and nonviolent options and what the repercussions could be. They explained that for them retaliation comes from a place of love and protection, rather than the revenge and anger I was expecting. One of the young men felt he would be responsible for stopping whoever was inflicting harm, because if he didn't, they could do it again to someone else. He seemed conflicted as he explained, “Then his people would come after me, and my people after his people...”

I continue to think about these conversations. A year ago, I never would have asked any of these questions about protection, safety, police, or profiling. It seems a cliché, but I wonder what Jesus would have done. I imagine Him meeting Zacchaeus where he was and acknowledging his human dignity. It reminds me of what I have learned about restorative justice: that people need to be able to speak their truth and have their voices heard in a space where everyone is treated with respect. It provides a safe space to address issues, hold people accountable for their actions, give everyone a chance to heal, and an opportunity to repair relationships. It provides a space for relationship, friendship, care, and most of all genuine love. ✠

Renewal Center, continued from page 8

Details for these and all our programs are on our website under the “Events” tab.

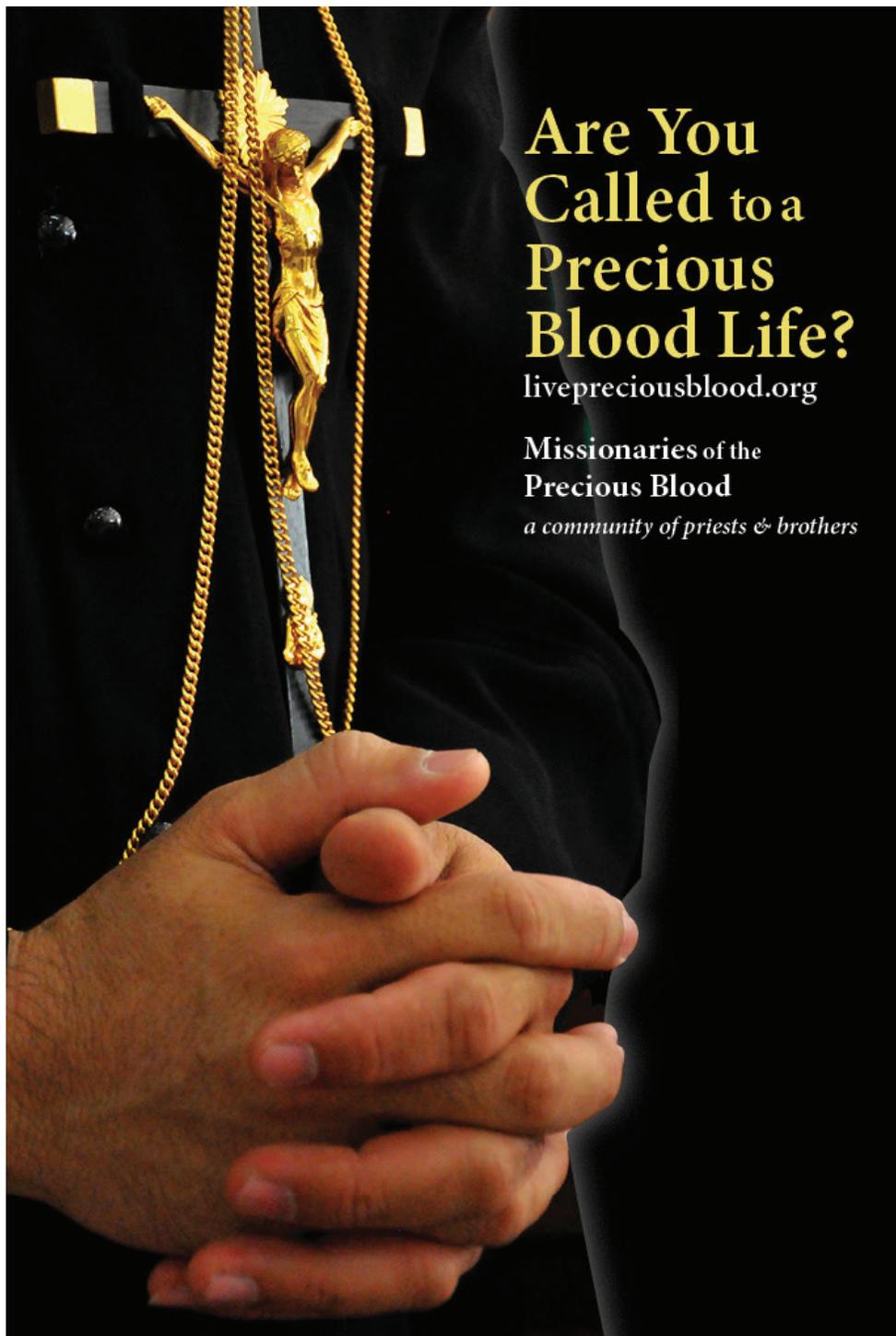
What will transpire in the next 10 months is unknowable, but the Renewal Center staff are hopeful.

“While I am looking forward to resuming in-person activities post-pandemic, I also look forward to continuing our outreach to the on-line audience we have developed during this trying time,” Kathy says.

Fr. Ron says, “If St. Paul were alive today, he would be using the internet to share his message about Jesus Christ. So, should I, even if I fumble my way through it.” ✠

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Precious Blood Center
P.O. Box 339
Liberty MO 64069-0339

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vocation@cpps-preciousblood.org
vocations@preciousbloodkc.org

