

THE New Wine PRESS

Volume 30 No. 3 • November 2021



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



Precious Blood Volunteers
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THE New Wine PRESS

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Front cover: Digital art based on rose and thorn talking piece from PBMR

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

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Communication

by Margaret Haik, Director of Communications

Last month, I compared the articles' overlap to a Venn Diagram. That seems to hold true again for our November issue of the *New Wine Press*. This month's articles all deal with ideas about communication. Some focus on listening, others focus on the mode of communication, or the community building effects of communal prayer or storytelling.

Fr. Keith Branson starts us off this month with consideration of the value of the detours that we experience in life. Specifically, he talks about the postponement of the electoral assembly as a detour. Using the upcoming synod as inspiration, he invites us to use this latest detour as an opportunity to be changed by listening to each other.

Fr. Mark Miller shares thoughts on a couple of conversations following his commentary from last month. He shares consideration of how the different cultures of the two provinces influence the model of Church that each values. Additionally, as the creation of the U.S. Province moves forward, the Precious Blood community in America must consider what model of Church the ministries will favor.

Nick Schaefer, Director of Mission Advancement for PBMR, shares the ways in which community has been built over the internet during the pandemic.

Fr. Bill Nordenbrock will be presenting "Sacred Church – Sinful Church: Creating a Community of Lamentation and Hope" at Precious Blood Renewal Center in November. We have a companion article this month that talks about the communicative and community building nature of prayer in times of difficulty.

Lastly, Central Missouri Companion Ruth Mather shares how conversation with members and Companions from both provinces has enabled new and deeper relationships for her.

George Bernard Shaw said, "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." I hope that as we enter into Advent at the end of November, we all use the time of preparation for Christmas to share our stories, and perhaps more importantly, to seek out others' stories to listen to. ✝

Detours

by Fr. Keith Branson, C.P.P.S., Provincial Council

Aunt Grace was my favorite relative when I was growing up. From time to time, she visited my grandparents, who lived up the street from us, and she always made time to take my brother, sister, and me on a day trip, usually to Kansas City. We lived our lives almost exclusively around my hometown, so these excursions were exciting. We visited art galleries, museums, historical sites, and several shopping malls. It was how we learned our way around the city and the wider world.

Whenever she missed a turn or went down the wrong road, she had a very relaxed attitude; she always said, “We’ll just go around the block and enjoy the scenery.” These detours were just one more part of the adventure, a few more things for us to discover that we wouldn’t have otherwise. That attitude has served me well as I got to know other cities like Chicago or San Francisco; I was able not to panic when I went the wrong way, and I would use the detours as a chance to get to know the area better. At times I even found more places I wanted to visit or more convenient roads to travel. They expanded my life in ways beyond my intended route.

I’m sure many of us are disappointed the October assembly was postponed due to Covid. Postponement has been an ugly fact of life over these past two years, and hopefully it has given us a chance to become more patient people. However, something is going on in the Church now that we may find helpful as we travel this detour together: the Synod of Bishops Pope Francis opened on October 10th. It is the beginning of a two-year process and will feature more participants at the synod throughout the Church than ever before in history. In a sense, Pope Francis is trying to make the entire Church a new creation.

Pope Francis sees this as “...not a parliament nor a survey of opinions, (but rather)...an ecclesial moment whose protagonist is the Holy Spirit.” Its purpose is to foster unity in the Church in the Spirit of Vatican II, calling all baptized members of the Church to participate fully in its life. He highlighted this importance in talking about those who work for the Church: “...we must acknowledge the frustration and impatience felt by many pastoral workers, members of diocesan and parish consultative bodies and women, who frequently remain on the fringes. Enabling everyone to participate is an essential ecclesial duty!”

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Leadership, continued from page 3

There are two more quotes from the opening of the synod which caught my eye:

Let us ask: in the Church, are we good at listening? ...Do we allow people to express themselves, to walk in faith even though they have had difficulties in life, and to be part of the life of the community without being hindered, rejected, or judged?

On the contrary, whenever we enter into dialogue, we allow ourselves to be challenged, to advance on a journey. And in the end, we are no longer the same; we are changed.



It's tempting when we're on a detour to turn off our mind and to focus on how we get back on the right road, to the exclusion of everything else. We have a great opportunity in this detour to learn more about ourselves and each other, provided we stay in dialogue. We shouldn't stop the discernment clock here to rewind it in June. We can make a lot more progress in building a new creation than if we had kept on schedule. Just as Pope Francis says the synod isn't a convention or a congress, our new creation cannot be just a corporation and a pastoral plan. Pope Francis says by listening to the Holy Spirit, the synod can be a process of healing. By taking this additional time to listen to the Holy Spirit together, we can better receive the gift of a New Creation.

Bibliographies are rare at the end of leadership columns, however, here are four good articles I found about the new synod's opening:

"There is no need to create another church, but to create a different church,' Francis says before synod." <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2021/10/09/pope-francis-synod-address-community-participation-mission-241607>

"Pope opens synod journey with reminder it's not a convention or a congress." <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2021/10/pope-opens-synod-journey-with-reminder-its-not-a-convention-or-a-congress/>

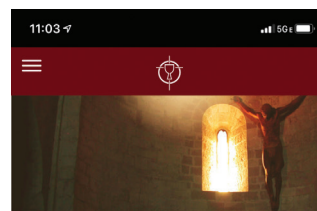
"By listening to Holy Spirit, synod can be process of healing, pope says." <https://cruxnow.com/cns/2021/10/by-listening-to-holy-spirit-synod-can-be-process-of-healing-pope-says/>

"Experts see synod as 'biggest consultation exercise in human history'" <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2021/10/experts-see-synod-as-biggest-consultation-exercise-in-human-history/> ✦

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This was developed as a way to quickly access the video content from our website. We've also included a way to access information on the events offered by Precious Blood Renewal Center. If you want to see our full website, there's a button for that, as well as a way to contact us via email or phone! Try out the email function and let us know what you think!

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Let Us Widen the Circle of Conversation

by Fr. Mark Miller, C.P.P.S., Liberty, Missouri

I have received several responses to my article in the October issue of the *New Wine Press*. Most of them were expressions of gratitude for raising the issue of how our two provinces seem to be “mistrusting” of the other. However, there were two responses, one from a member of the Cincinnati Province and one from a Companion that I would like to share. I don’t know if they or others will write directly to our publications, but I would like to refer to these two because I believe they have something to reflect upon and hopefully discuss among ourselves.

The member from the Cincinnati Province placed this “mistrust” in the context of “culture.” He believes that since 1965, our two provinces have developed different “cultures,” both in our community life and in our ministries. He even used the terms “pioneer” and “settlers” to describe how we seem to approach the ordinary way of life and the various situations which confront us on both sides of the Mississippi. There is more flexibility on the part of pioneers—adapting to the local culture, more open to the new even in terms of Bishop’s and Church rules—whereas settlers seem to dig in, build, not just for today but for a lifetime.

This reflection on “culture” relates to what a Companion wrote in her understanding of what might be going on. She invites us to look at *Models of the Church* by Avery Dulles. Cardinal Dulles initially had five descriptions as a model of Church. None was separate from another, but he divided them by where the emphasis was placed for each approach. The five models were: Church as Institution; Church as a Mystical Communion; Church as a Sacrament; Church as Herald of the Good News; and Church as Servant, committed to social justice. He later added a sixth, namely: Church as a Community of Disciples.

Even though this was far after St Gaspar’s time, my understanding of the mind of Gaspar was that he would be comfortable in the models of Church as Herald of the Good News and as Servant. I think when Fr. Brunner brought our Community to the

U.S., his model was more of Church as Institution and as Sacrament. None of these models are wrong, but they place a significant emphasis on how one does ministry and lives community life. I am not sure which the American Province embraced most, but I suspect that it was more along the lines of Brunner rather than Gaspar.

As we look back at the beginning of our two Provinces, what models describe how we approach our ministries and community life? This Companion recognizes that “no one operates exclusively out of one model, and the models are not right or wrong, though I would add that some are more fruitful and helpful in certain situations than others.” She believes the Kansas City Province is more like the “Community of Disciples” model while the Cincinnati Province is more like Church as Institution.

I offer these two images as a way of furthering our dialogue as we prepare for the “New Creation.” How do we decide which model or combination of models we wish to develop and claim as our own?

Let us remember that Pope Francis added an additional model of Church: Church as a Social Network. Which models or models will guide us in the future? †



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The New Wine Press

Brought Near Through the Blood of Christ... and the Internet

by Nick Schafer, PBMR Director of Mission Advancement

We don't sit still much at PBMR. On the occasions when I do, I happen to sit next to Fr. Kelly. At least our desks are next to one another.

Father Dave's desk is a working space. It's not your typical CEO's office with a fancy desk, big computer monitors, and meticulously curated wall art. What pictures and mementos are present amid the papers, grant reports, budgets, and piles of mail serve as reminders. Fuel for the soul during the long days and hard times. A picture here, a handwritten note there. A piece of art from a participant hangs next to a worship aid for one of the many funerals he's attended. Under the glass tabletop are "mug shots" of young men and boys caught up in the system. He knows each one. He knows them and their stories. He sees those pictures every day. He prays for them with his heart and the work of his hands. They're his boys. His brothers and sons. They're at the core of his mission, his ministry, his charism. They are family.

If you've been around Fr. Kelly very long, you've likely heard him refer to one of the passages in scripture that encapsulates the essence of Precious Blood spirituality, and in turn everything we do at PBMR: "You who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:12-14).

I've been thinking about what that means, to be brought near. For me, the answer always starts with the invitation. I love to hear the stories of how folks become connected to Precious Blood spirituality and PBMR. Participants, volunteers, friends, donors, staff, and board members all come to this place through connections which seem so improbable that one cannot help but feel the Holy Spirit at work.

A mother walking down the street who stops to say hello to Sr. Donna while she's working in the Peace Garden; a young man talking with a prison chaplain; a former model turned trainer sitting in circle with a former maximum-security inmate—all relationships that start with an invitation. From their fragile beginnings, friendships grow in depth and breadth, bringing people together.

Lately, those connections have been nurtured in a virtual environment. For nearly two years we've maintained relationships via Zoom, Facebook, email, and phone calls. In that time there has been a very intentional effort to bring PBMR out into the virtual spaces. To help our PBMR community, near and far, remain connected to one another. It's also been an opportunity to make new friendships and invitations to join our community.

In October, PBMR launched its third virtual event called "Conversations that Matter," a series of interactive virtual panel discussions focused on addressing critical issues facing our community, and then asking, what's possible? For these sessions we featured experts. Not PhDs, researchers, or social scientists—rather these panels featured incredible messengers who brought deep wisdom gained from lived experiences. We heard from returning citizens about the challenges facing those who have been incarcerated, and from mothers speaking about the trauma of losing children to violence, and finally from young people sharing the very real threats to their safety that they face every day. As I listened to each of the panelists share their stories, I marveled at how experiences of trauma, pain, and loss gave birth to compassion, strength, and resolve.

Rooted in our Catholic faith, I'm sure we can all empathize with those who suffer the effects of mass incarceration. We are sympathetic to mothers and grandmothers who have lost children to violence and incarceration and recognize that there are real threats to young people, especially those from underserved communities (like Back of the Yards and Englewood). But how many of us have lived through those experiences? I haven't. But through the relationship with those who have, I am brought near.

Not everyone can be a regular at PBMR. Some may not ever make it to our campus. But the invitation to enter into relationship with the PBMR community is as important as ever. Don't get me wrong, I'll be the first to celebrate holding larger in-person gatherings once

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Building a Community of Hope

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

I have a good friend who likes to say that when he looks at the mess he sees in the world and the Church, it seems to him that God isn't doing God's job. The world and the Church are a mess and God doesn't seem to do anything about it. While on one level he realizes that it is silly to blame God for what is human foibles and folly, it reflects his sense of hopelessness that as humans we will ever "get it right" without some divine intervention.

It is a part of the human condition, a part of our human psyche, to try to make sense of the world in which we live. We ask: What is going on here in this a particular situation? Why is "this" happening? Whatever "this" happens to be. And as believers, I think we ask: Where is God in this? And maybe most poignantly, when what is happening is disturbing, or painful, or just seems wrong to us, don't we ask: Why does God allow this situation to be like this? Why doesn't God do something about this? Doesn't God love us? Isn't God all-powerful?

What do you do when God disappoints you?

If that resonates with you, then you are part of a long history of God's people raising their voices in lament. Crying out to God, expressing our pain and confusion, asking for divine intervention. God's people have often come together as a community of lamentation.

I have heard Christians ask: Is it OK to complain to God? Is it OK to accuse God of abandoning us, of rejecting us and ignoring our pleas? Well, let's look at the example of Jesus.

In the garden, on the eve of his crucifixion, his passion journey has already begun. This is a portrait of a very human Jesus who sees his situation (at least in how it is portrayed in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark) and what is to come, and he is full of anguish. Jesus appears very fearful and uncertain. And Jesus cries out to a silent God and asks that he be spared, that this cup of suffering pass him by. But the fully divine Jesus, the Jesus who was one

with the Father, accepted to suffer and pour out his life, placing his hope and trust in the will of God; the plan of God.

And let's remember that the next day, as he drank from that cup of suffering, his last prayer to God was to pray from a psalm of lament. Psalm 22 begins: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" And with that prayer echoing on Calvary, Jesus died. And Mary wept. And God was silent. But the story did not end.

Unspoken, or at least unrecorded in the passion narrative, is how the prayer continues that Jesus begins.

*Why are you so far from helping me,
from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but you did not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.
Yet, you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
In you our ancestors trusted,
they trusted, and you delivered them.
In you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame. (v.1b-5)*

It is the whole of Psalm 22 that allows us to see in Jesus our example of faithful lament: To lament is the honest prayer of a transparent spirit in distress and a faithful soul that never abandons their trust in God.

I think for all of us, there are times when God is silent. There are times when we cry out, in grief, in disappointment, in frustration, in confusion—and God is silent. In these times, for us to lament is to pray in truth. It is to go to God with an open heart and open wounds. It is to pray with a spirit that is naked in the storm and it is to allow the Spirit of God to help us pray in that weakness.

So it is with the help of God's own Spirit that we can cry out: *This is how I am suffering.*

We cry out like an abandoned child: *This is the help that I need — come back to me.*

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Getting to Know You

by Ruth Mather, *Central Missouri Companion*

In reading the latest issue of *The Cup of the New Covenant*, two comments among the articles spoke to me as we move toward a New Creation in the United States. This particular publication is rich in articles about Precious Blood spirituality and how we are all brothers and sisters. These are the words that got me thinking about how well we know each other:

"...a society where differences coexist, complementing, enriching, and reciprocally illuminating one another, even amid disagreements and reservations. Each of us can learn something from others."—Alois Schlachter, C.P.P.S., "Fratelli Tutti and the Community of the Precious Blood," *The Cup of the New Covenant*, No. 50, June 2021.

"...it's pretty hard to love your neighbor if you don't know your neighbor."—Matt Link, C.P.P.S., "Living God's Inclusive Love," *The Cup of the New Covenant*, No. 50, June 2021.

It's not just members not knowing Companions or Companions not knowing members. It is also members not knowing members and Companions not knowing Companions. I may know many of you by name and some more than others, but I do not know you all. And there is always something of value for each of us to learn from the others. The more we know,—at least a little—about each other, the less apprehensive the future will seem. How do we do that? Conversation is key.

How many opportunities do we have to get to know our community better? As our world slowly comes out of the pandemic restrictions, what are ways we can get to know each other?

Impromptu conversations at gatherings, Assemblies, retreats, days of reflection, workshops, and celebrations. Attending member retreats and Companion retreats. And while there are a few members that sometimes join in Companion retreats, what about a more inclusive concept of Community retreats?

All are welcome at area Companion gatherings too. When other community members/Companions

are in the area, please join us. I have attended and been welcomed at other Companion gatherings here in Missouri and other states. Area members, not just sponsors, often join in these gatherings as well. It's not only a good way to meet and converse with others in our community, it is interesting to see how other Companion gatherings are held. I can honestly say I have taken something new and/or different from each experience.

If within a local commuting distance, get together for coffee, brunch, dinner, or drinks. This can be spontaneous or planned well in advance, between just two or three, or larger groups.

Except for last year (2020), I have visited St. Charles Center in Ohio at least once each year since I made my first covenant as a Precious Blood Companion. I have had many conversations with the members living there. Each year there are new residents. Of course, there are some I miss seeing because they have moved to the infirmary or passed away. But I am always welcomed and enjoy a variety of conversations. The members at St. Charles have a wealth of interesting stories and experiences. I have come to greatly appreciate their perspectives on many subjects and the fact that they share them with me.

As I continue to contemplate what the New Creation will be like, I know not everyone will be on the same page. This is expected and should be all right. But understanding differences and having conversations about why one sees things differently is important. If we understand the reasoning and/or cause behind differences, instead of conflict and apprehension, diversity and appreciation for other points of view can be embraced.

Again, conversation is key. But meaningful conversation is a challenge if we don't know each other. We need the opportunity to step out of our comfort zones and participate in those conversations. Each of us should be looking for ways to enter into the dialogue, participate, share thoughts and ideas. We come from diverse backgrounds, have a variety of talents

and experiences. Sharing these with the community widens possibilities and strengthens a relationship.

If as a community, we come together in this New Creation and collectively embrace our future, anticipation will replace apprehension. Let's get to know one another better. We can start by watching for opportunities to have a simple conversation with those in our Precious Blood Community that we do not know as well as others. The more we know about each other, the stronger and more viable our community can be. ✦

PBMR, continued from page 6

again. I love it when people do stop by the center for a tour, to participate in a circle training, or just for a cup of coffee. But those virtual interactions can be meaningful as well.

If John the Baptist was operating today, I think he would take his ministry into the digital desert. The internet may not be barren and dry, but it is every bit a space yearning for subsistence and nourishment. Perhaps it's not even a desert at all. The virtual landscape often feels more like Noah's flood. There is so much data, content, silly cat videos, opinions, politics, chain letters, and meme's it's easy to become overwhelmed, discouraged, and drown.

I recall the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila: "Christ has no body but yours...No hands, no feet on earth but yours." In 2010, author Meredith Gould re-crafted the prayer for modern applications. She writes:

Christ Has No Online Presence but Yours
Christ Has No Online Presence but Yours
No blog, no Facebook page but yours,
Yours are the tweets through which love touches the world,
Yours are the posts through which the Gospel is shared,
Yours are the updates through which hope is revealed.
Christ has no online presence but yours,
No blog, no Facebook page, but yours.

We are all invited into this work. And there is no telling when or where that invitation will come. If you haven't received an invitation, consider this yours. Visit www.pbmr.org, listen to the recording of Conversations that Matter. Share it with your friends

and family, invite them in. Because that invitation is how we are all brought near.

Take good care. ✦

Community of Hope, continued from page 7

To lament is to cry out in distress, but also with hope and persistent endurance. We pray: *Even now, O God, we trust that you will return to save us. Even now we trust that your love and mercy will overcome our grief and despair, our confusion and uncertainty. We know that you, O God, are a God of unfailing love and mercy, and so we trust and place our hope in you, even when you are silent, even when you are slow to intervene.*

When you look at our Church, is this sometimes your prayer? You are not alone. I also lament the unfulfilled promise of a Gospel vision of a people in communion with one another and God; united as the Body of Christ in fulfilling the plan of God. It is easy to recognize and bemoan a lack of faithfulness in our Church. It is much harder to express that recognition in a prayer that remains grounded in hope.

We don't have to pray alone. William Blaine-Wallace writes in his book, *When Tears Sing*, that there is a grace in collective vulnerability, because it creates a relationship between us. Our shared lament is like a conversation where one can testify to their pain and know that others are with them and witness their distress. And he writes that this shared lament, this relationship forged in time crisis creates us together as a community of hope. When we face together our shame or disappointment in a sinful Church (or our despair in a society and culture that seems to be tearing itself apart from the inside), as believers we help one another to remember the faithfulness of God. Through shared lament we remain a community of faith and together we move through our lament to a place of deep trust and we become a community of hope.

A community of hope—that is a pretty good description of the Church that we are called to be. ✦

THE **New Wine** PRESS
Precious Blood Center
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Change Service Requested



Sacred Church – Sinful Church

*Creating a community
of lamentation and hope*

Nov. 20-21 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday
8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Sunday

Led by Fr. Bill Nordenbrock, C.P.P.S. Through prayer and shared narratives, we will acknowledge the tension of living our faith in a Church of great grace that often disappoints us by failing to be faithful to the vision of the Gospel. This weekend retreat will help us create communities of lamentation and hope.

Location

Precious Blood Renewal Center
2120 St. Gaspar Way
Liberty, Missouri 64068

Registration

<https://pbrenewalcenter.org/events>
Registration is \$10. Scholarships are available.
Inquire with the Renewal Center.

Registrations close November 17th and is limited to 20 persons. There will be a wait-list for those who register after our limit has been reached.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

- Those who feel excluded by Church policy and practices.
- Those discouraged by the polarizing and conflicting visions of Church that have led to the practice of mutual excommunicating of the “other.”
- Those struggling to remain in a Church that sometimes fails to protect the vulnerable.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

The emphasis of the retreat will be on a process of shared storytelling with only brief presentations. We will utilize the Listening Circle method to create together a safe place for personal sharing and truth-telling.