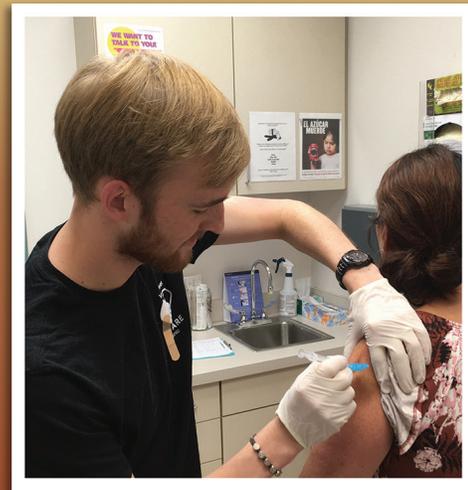




THE **New Wine** PRESS

Volume 30 No. 7 • March 2022

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



Precious Blood Volunteers
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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

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Relationship in Mission

by Margaret Haik, Director of Communications

Seventeen years ago, Kate sat in my studio, lip quivering and eyes welling up with tears, letting the stress of her senior year of high school wash over her. She was there for her weekly music lesson, which focused on getting ready for the spring solo and ensemble competition, but that day it was important to let her express the emotions she felt as high school was rapidly ending and the unknowns of college approached. For me, being a private music instructor meant that often I was a student's safe space for emotional dumping, the privilege of having taught a child for many years. It was a relationship built on helping Kate discover her musical strengths, guiding her through the challenges she encountered while learning new skills and applying them during performances or competitions, and celebrating with her when she found success.

Our articles this month made me think of Kate because they are all about relationship in mission. Fr. Dave Kelly called us a “messy human family.” We may be messy, but building strong relationships creates strong communities. And, just as relationship building was a key ingredient in my teaching, Companion Director Vicky Otto talks this month about relationships as essential to the Companions movement.

Brother Daryl Charron also talks about relationship building as an important ingredient in leadership. Leaders should be more like hosts, he said, and move away from top-down decision-making.

Amici Carolyn and Dennis Keller reflect on a recent trip and challenge people in church leadership to focus on mission rather than consolidation.

Precious Blood Reconciliation Center will feature a series by Father Ron Will on the Gospel of Luke, which offers the most insight into the person of Jesus. Fr. Ron asks, to whom are we called into relationship with this Lent? As Jesus challenged the early disciples to leave everything to enter into relationship with him, what are we called to “leave behind” in order to enter into relationship with those in need?

As a teacher, I was called to relationship with my students that allowed for more than just the music lesson on the agenda. I am happy to report that Kate, although an excellent musician, became an even more excellent youth minister in her own faith community. How will your relationships in your mission touch the lives of those in need? †

Host, Not Hero

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

These past four months I have participated in a leadership workshop led by Faith and Praxis for Global Leadership. It was entitled, “New Blood for the World: The Call of the Blood to Become Spirit Filled Leaders in an Emerging World.” Members of the A.S.C. and C.P.P.S. communities from around the world participated in a series of four modules on developing leadership skills. It was a wonderful experience to interact online with our men and women religious from our Precious Blood communities and share ideas about leadership.

The workshop presenters directed us to www.artofhosting.org, which explained the philosophy behind some of their presentations. During one of our presentations, the instructor encouraged us to act more like “hosts” and less like “heroes” when it comes to leadership. I really liked that idea, given my past positions as hospitality and guest coordinator in retreat ministry. It also helps that hospitality is one of our charisms that we try to accentuate in our Community. When doing further study and research on the website, it was also encouraging to see them mention circles and appreciative discernment. These two tools for leadership are also operative in our Community. I found that very affirming as we move forward in our discernment of leadership of our new province.

The instructors from Faith and Praxis informed us that a leader these days needs to be a host. They said leadership is about convening. A leader is one who convenes diversity and who convenes all viewpoints in creative processes where our mutual intelligence can come forth. They challenged us to think of our religious community as a living system in which to pay attention to certain features such as connections, relationships, and meaning.

They warned us about the pitfalls of acting like a hero. You’re acting like a hero when you believe that if you just work harder, you will fix things. You think that if you just get smarter you will be able to solve problems for others. You are acting as a hero if you take on more and more projects and have less time for relationships. If you choose this path, you end up feeling lonely, exhausted, and unappreciated.

It was pointed out that there seems to be a false notion in religious life that the capacity for leadership resides only in a select few.

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Reengaging Each Other and Our Neighbors in a Divided World.

by Vicky Otto, *Precious Blood Companions* Director

The older I get, the more I appreciate the gifts that my parents gave me. One of them was a love of reading. I enjoy most novels, history, or other works, but I have never been a fan of poetry. I often get impatient trying to figure out what point the poet is trying to make in their symbolic writing. Thanks to our Companion retreats this year, “Outside the Gate—Reengaging Each Other and Our Neighbors in a Divided World,” I may have to give poetry another try.

As a Companion in formation, I often heard the phrase, “Where location is essential to a realtor, relationships are essential to Companions.” Building these relationships takes place at our gatherings and our annual retreat. Not holding the retreat during

the height of the pandemic was a significant blow for Companions. While virtual gatherings were helpful, they did not have the same significance as meeting in person. One can imagine then that when the retreats were announced, Companions were excited to “get back to normal.”

During the retreat, Fr. Dave Matz, serving as retreat leader, encouraged participants to pray with music and poetry. As I reflected upon the retreat, one of the poems offered, “New Day’s Lyric” written by Amanda Gorman, beautifully echoed the energy of the retreat. She begins, “May this be the day we come together. Mourning, we come to mend, withered, we come to weather, torn, we come to tend, battered we come to better.” Our retreat

began by giving all who gathered the opportunity to share their experiences during the pandemic. The grace that occurred during this time was that because we were in relationship with each other as Companions, we could prayerfully, as Gorman writes, mourn together, acknowledge the hurts, and care for each other.

As the title of our retreat suggests, we then moved “Outside the Gate.” Gorman writes, “This hope is our door, our portal. Even if we never get back to normal, someday we can venture beyond it, to leave the know and take the first steps. So let us not return to what was normal, but reach toward what is next.” Focus then shifted to moving outside the gate, especially recognizing that we are not the same people in this post-pandemic world. Again, grace and mercy flowed in the support that Companions gave each other as we explored possibilities.

One of the most influential movements of the retreat came when we acknowledged the importance and strength of relationships and the future. Gorman writes, “So let us not return to what was normal but reach toward what is next.... Where we weren’t aware, we’re now awake; those moments we missed are now moments we make, the moments we meet, and our hearts, once all together beaten, now all together beat.” Fr. Dave helped guide our reflections and prayer to recognize that the future is now before us, and our strength is evident when we stand together as a community. The excitement that everyone gathered felt when we gathered in retreat was echoed when we looked to the future. There was a distinct recognition that our community is stronger when we work together and when “our hearts beat together as one.” The need for this strength became apparent as we discussed the divisions in our world today and the importance of our roles as ambassadors of reconciliation as we help others reengage with each other. As we concluded our retreat with liturgy and renewal of covenants, it felt as if there was a stronger sense of commitment than I have experienced in the past.

I am grateful that Ms. Gorman has given readers a roadmap of sorts that Companions benefited from during the retreats that may apply to each

of us. It is hard to move forward into the future without first acknowledging the pains and wounds of the past. When we recognize where we have been, we can move to the future. The fear of the future becomes insignificant when we recognize that we need every person in our Precious Blood community. It is when our hearts beat together we truly become one. And in that oneness, as a song from King and Country suggests, “Together we are bolder, braver, stronger.”

After this retreat experience, I guess I am going to have to give poetry another try. ✠

Leadership, continued from page 3

Unfortunately, this way of thinking leads to unrealistic expectations of the leader to meet everyone’s needs. We are then not utilizing the collective wisdom of the Community. Therefore, there is a lack of opportunity for members to grow in their leadership potentials.

Our instructors emphasized the benefits of being holistic and collaborative, being focused on relationship and process, sharing meaning and consensus. They recommended moving away from too much linear thinking and top/down decision-making.

Overall, I appreciated the opportunity the modules offered to teach me about leadership. It led me to go to St. Gaspar and his writings in this regard. I find it helpful and inspiring to reflect on his words from Letter 1080 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi: “It has been quite some time that I have been able to note that certain people are not fit to rule the Province, and yet things go on in a certain fashion. God does not endow everyone with levelness of mind, with logical reasoning, with orderliness, or with a certain pleasant external mode of governing things. This also helps us in our pursuit of humility. So, let us pray a great deal that God will give such members to his Church who are dedicated to the urgent needs of our times, for this is truly a gift of the Lord.” ✠



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Signs of the Times

by Carol & Dennis Keller, Amici

The weekend of the 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Carol and I visited my sisters and brother in the northern part of the Cincinnati Archdiocese. It was the first time going home from North Carolina since before the pandemic. The region had changed. Some of those changes were very personal. The three rows of brick in the walls of my birth home had been backhoed and carted away. The hickory beamed barn was salvaged, as were the oak beams of the garage. The silo was scrapped and the apple trees behind the house were brush pile fuel. I lived there for thirteen years before going to Brunnerdale. It was the place I saw every day from the porch at St. Charles just two miles across fields.

The area is known for its many “cross-topped steeples.” No longer the center of towns, the brick and stone buildings were sad testimony to the faithful residing now in nearby cemeteries. The homilist at St. Denis that Sunday tied together the narrative of the rich young man more attached to his wealth than to his calling, and a letter from the Archbishop announcing the “Beacons of Light” project of the Archdiocese. The gist of the announcement was that more parishes would be lumped together to be served by one or two priests. The faithful buried nearby must have shed tears realizing their sacrifices and dollars somehow had not endured the changes in

culture. Attendance was down, baptisms were down, marriages in church were down.

Farms in the area had merged. One farmer could handle tilling, cultivating, and harvesting a whole section of land. New equipment had sized up to handle the absence of neighbors harvesting with neighbors. My sister told me most farmers worked in a shop during the week and farmed on weekends. Fences had disappeared because cattle and hogs wandered in loafing sheds and on slatted floors that allowed digestive waste to be flushed into lagoons for later application to fields. Chicken houses were quarter mile long buildings of two floors that brought total automation to watering, feeding, and collection of eggs. Those changes seemed to justify all the combines raising harvesting dust on this particular Sunday. There were no impending storms that would allow the pastor to dispense from a day of rest. Perhaps that explained the low attendance at Mass?

Rugged individualism seemed the lived philosophy. It was reflected in political leanings and fueled belief that the pandemic was merely a hoax. Vaccination rates were low. Carol and I attended Mass at St. Denis and were embarrassed at being the only persons wearing masks. Many farmsteads and village homes displayed yard signs saying, “Pray to

end Abortion.” Yet the connection between that and the common good goal of vaccination somehow was lost. The vaccination rate was in the low thirties. On the farms, nearly all livestock, swine, chickens, and cats and dogs were vaccinated.

Rugged individualism typically is distrustful of politics and politicians. However, a second yard sign shouted support for “Trump and Pence.” The supposed connection between the two signs was that those politicians were Pro-Life. Even though their political efforts, executive and legislative, focused little to nothing to support life after birth—especially life that was socially, educationally, and economically challenged. A logical deduction would lead a discerning person to believe the “Pro-Life” statements were for show and about votes. Not life.

It is the “Beacons of Light” announcement that bothers Carol and me. It sounded much more like an accounting function, a sort of balance sheet response to current issues. New Evangelization has been around since St. John Paul II. I recall being invited to speak to the clergy of the deanery in Brighton, Michigan when that effort was first presented. Some will condemn the world for the fall off of faith communities and participation. They say it is the faithful surrendering to consumerism, to secularism, or to the now dying modernism. Really?

The announcement seems a lot like the “new-creation” of the Community in which both of us were formed. We are troubled that this opportunity to re-think evangelization is going to be just a merger and a matter of accountancy and consolidation of leadership. Coming together, or perhaps as some would picture it, a return of prodigal sons, is about assets, not mission.

There has been talk about the “signs of the times” ever since Vatican II. The signs of the times, not only in our Church and in our country, but globally as well, are forebodingly dark. Within politics and even within the Roman Church there is a diatribe identified as culture wars. The vitality of the Gospel is being stolen. In these times of scarce resources, we should be looking less at logistics and more about the need for evangelization. Ministry can easily and corruptly morph into administrative structuring.

There is a clear lesson for all this in Fr. Dennis Chriszt’s reflection the 31st Sunday of Ordinary Time. He wrote of St. Gaspar’s evangelization to the bandits of Sonnino. The menfolk were gathered into mountain caves with their collected weapons. Clear and certain bloodshed, disruption of families, and destruction of homes, businesses, and livelihoods were imminent. Rape and pillage were certain. Gaspar went to the dark mouths of those caves without regard for his life. He preached the Christ and the living presence of God, forgiveness, and reconciliation. A blood bath was averted. Fr. Dennis noted that even now, the people recognize the Missionaries’ mission crosses with gratitude.

Is the efficacy of the Blood no longer available to the sons of Gaspar? The signs of the time are here. Violence, distrust of leadership, rampant poverty amidst Midas-like wealth, unlimited education for those with resources, tremendous improvement in health care for those with insurance. The quality and variety of food was unthinkable less than fifty years ago. Yet starvation is a constant cause of death even in the wealthiest nation in all of history. Is there not sufficient darkness in the land, in the Church, in the world to create a new evangelization and implement what St. John Paul II encouraged? Even a small band can create the dialogue that leads to truth in the face of lies, hope in the face of despair, and a peace and justice in the face of violence and division. We would like to hear more about mission and less about consolidation! ✠



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The Inclusive Community: Jesus in St. Luke's Gospel

by Fr. Ron Will, C.P.P.S., Precious Blood Renewal Center

As we enter into the season of Lent, we journey in a special way with the participants in our parish RCIA process who are preparing for full initiation into the Catholic Church. The Gospel according to Luke is our primary Gospel during this liturgical year. Luke's Gospel describes an inclusive community, which is what our RCIA tries to do as we reach out to include new members into our family. But Jesus challenges us to be inclusive beyond new members in our RCIA process. Jesus challenges us to be as inclusive as he is.

In his Gospel, St. Luke has a single stirring aim for each person who picks up his work: "...that you may come to know a deep assurance about the teaching you have received" (1:4). The book was written to a man called Theophilus. The title given him is the normal title of a high official in the Roman government. Without a doubt Luke wrote it to tell a sincere inquirer more about Jesus.

The Gospel according to Luke highlights aspects of Jesus' ministry and teachings differently than the other Gospels do. If we did not have the Gospel of Luke, there would be a lot that we would not know about Jesus.

Luke wrote both a Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, which is almost a quarter of the New Testament. Together he presents a narrative of early Christianity, from Gabriel's annunciation about the birth of John the Baptist in Jerusalem to the Apostle Paul announcing the Gospel of Jesus in Rome.

Luke was a second-generation Christian who may have been a Gentile admirer of Judaism before his conversion. He was well-educated, traveled widely, wrote excellent Greek, and was influenced by contemporary modes of writing history. He echoes the atmosphere, the language, and at times even the style of the Old Testament. Luke tells us directly that he is handing on what contemporaries of Jesus have reported (1:1-4). Writing about fifty years after the time of Jesus (about AD 85), he incorporates many stories and sayings from Mark (written about AD 70), and in addition a further source

labeled "the Q source," which is believed to have been used by both Luke and Matthew but has been lost to us today. Luke shapes the traditions, however, according to his own rich perspective.

Luke describes Jesus' concern for people's healing and salvation. Luke's Jesus is the herald of healing peace. Luke's Jesus is the good and gentle Savior. At the same time, though, Luke is blunt about Jesus' stern demands on those who become his disciples, who must take up their cross daily and leave everything to follow him.

Luke contains certain features that the other Gospel accounts omit or mention only in passing. Joy is a distinct emphasis. So are prayer, the Holy Spirit, Jesus' friendships with women, his teaching on hospitality, and right attitude about wealth. Luke alone gives us the infancy narrative, including the birth of John the Baptist, the angel Gabriel's annunciation to Mary, and her visitation to Elizabeth.

It has been said that the third Gospel is the best life of Christ ever written.

Luke was a Gentile, a doctor by profession; and he has the unique distinction of being the only New Testament writer who was not a Jew.

The biblical symbol of Luke is the calf. The calf is the animal for sacrifice; and Luke saw in Jesus the sacrifice for all the world. In Luke above all, the barriers are broken down and Jesus is for Jew and Gentile, saint and sinner alike. He is the savior of the entire world.

As the trusted companion of St. Paul, he must have known all the great figures of the church, and we may be sure that he had them tell their stories to him. For two years he was Paul's companion during his imprisonment in Caesarea. In those long days he had every opportunity for study and research, and he must have used them well. Luke is a man who is writing with care and who will be as accurate as it is possible for him to be.

St. Luke's Gospel, continued from page 9

that the Kingdom he speaks of does not only concern the afterlife; it is also something here and now, in this time and space. Luke emphasizes that this Kingdom is not restricted to the confines of the Temple, which was the seat of power for the religious hierarchy in Jesus' day. It is far bigger than that, and this fact will be too much for some to handle.

There are eighteen parables found only in Luke. In these unique parables the focus is on compassion, forgiveness, and really seeing those whom society does not see.

Jesus, for Luke, is someone who has come to deeply challenge people's expectations, who promises that the "last shall be first," and brings "good news to the poor" and "release to captives."

Luke's Jesus comes across as an accessible human being, someone we can confide in, a person ready to listen to us, a man who is not afraid of our problems.

Browsing through the pages of his writings, we soon feel the warmth of the man and the human appeal of the Jesus whom he tells us about. Luke's Gospel gives us the human face of Jesus. By doing this he eases us into the mystery of Christ's divinity. In making us feel at home with the human Jesus, Luke shows us how to be intimate with the divine Christ.

There is a prominence of meals in Luke. Where else is one going to feel more human, more in touch with family and community, than in the intimacy of a meal? Luke presents us with a Jesus who seems to thrive on going to dinners, unguarded situations where people can be more receptive to his saving message. It is Luke who has the most beloved dinner scene in the bible—the Emmaus meal.

Jesus walks through Luke's Gospel seeking lost people: a prodigal son, a sinful woman, the scrappy little tax collector, Zacchaeus, and the good thief. Jesus likes to tell stories about lost coins and lost sheep.

Jesus' merciful concern reaches out especially to poor people. Jesus quotes in full a text from Isaiah about bringing Good News to the poor. Only in Luke

does Jesus tell the story about the poor man Lazarus so insensitively ignored by the rich man. Nothing is more human about a face than one that looks with love and pity on those in need. That is the face of Jesus we see in Luke.

Yet, there is nothing sentimental about the face of Jesus in Luke. The depth we see there is the kind that draws people to discipleship—strong, not quite stern. This is the Jesus who is unafraid to ask people to leave everything to follow him. The demand of discipleship appears again and again. Leave the self. Take the cross. Follow Jesus.

To gaze on the human face of Jesus in Luke is to see someone who is at peace and in absolute touch with God. Even in Luke's Way of the Cross, where the women weep over his suffering, one of them is drawn to taking a warm towel to soothe his face so that its human dignity is not marred and hidden by the blood and sweat. Tradition says this woman was Veronica and that her act was rewarded by having the imprint of Christ's face left on the towel. We will always want to see the human face of Jesus. St. Luke has guaranteed we will not be disappointed.

Jesus challenges us to be as inclusive as he is. To whom are you called to reach out and include in your circle of influence this Lent? How does Luke speak to our Precious Blood spirituality, which calls us to "hear the cry of the blood"? †

**The Inclusive Community:
Jesus in Luke's Gospel**

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

Saturday, Feb. 12, 10-11:30 a.m. CT

or

Tuesday, Feb. 15, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. CT

Register online at:

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Participate in-person or via Zoom.

2022 Precious Blood Scholarship

from Al Ebach, C.P.P.S., Precious Blood Scholarship Committee Chairperson

Members, Companions, and province staff again have the opportunity to nominate students for the Kansas City Province Scholarship. The scholarship application packet is available at <https://preciousbloodkc.org/2022-scholarship>.

Ten \$1000 scholarships will be awarded to students attending, or planning to attend, a Catholic high school or college. Students must be recommended by members, Companions, or province staff. Student nominees should be those who may not have the means to attend a Catholic institution unless financial assistance is available. The young people should be involved in their local church, community, or school. Students may be awarded a scholarship twice, not necessarily in consecutive years.

Thank you to those who have recommended students to receive scholarships, and thanks to the province for continuing to fund this cause. Recipients will be notified of their scholarship award in late spring/early summer. The students' schools will receive the scholarship money in October 2022.

2022 Precious Blood Human Development Fund

by Fr. John Wolf, C.P.P.S., Human Development Fund Chairperson

The application for the province Human Development Fund is available for 2022. The application packet is available at <https://preciousbloodkc.org/2022-human-development-fund/>. Completed applications are due by May 1, 2022.

The criteria for the Human Development Fund include demonstrated need and a connection to the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Amounts up to \$10,000 can be requested. Projects in the United States not directed by C.P.P.S. or A.S.C. members will be funded for a maximum of three years. After that, the project leaders are to seek funding from other sources. Other projects will be judged on an individual basis. Human Development Fund awards will be announced in July 2022.



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One Messy Human Family

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

In honor of celebrating our 20th year of PBMR, we have been going through old photographs from over the years. Some of those pictures bring back memories of pivotal moments—moments which capture the heart of who we are at PBMR. Reflecting on how far we have come and how we have grown, I believe that a good deal of that is because from the very beginning we embraced the attitude and value of being a learning community. I believe we were able to grow by being open to new ideas without losing sight of our calling—to be ambassadors of Reconciliation.

My work in Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center has been a constant commitment throughout the years. It has been a cornerstone of learning for me, and for what I am able to bring to PBMR. In fact, it was through the young voices in

Cook County Juvenile Detention where Sr. Donna was first called to reach more deeply to the mothers of children who are incarcerated and whose life was taken by violence.

Last Sunday, as I entered the intake unit of Juvenile Detention (where new kids to the facility are housed), I heard my name being called from behind one of the cell doors. As I approached, I recognized the young man, Zabrien, immediately. He had been there a few times before. He had gotten into a bit of trouble, so they had him behind a closed door—confinement. If I was to visit, it had to be through the door. He had look on his face that demonstrated that he was disappointed in himself for not staying out of detention. As we spoke, we began talking about why he came back. His is a litany of trauma: shot twice, locked up four or five

times, mother not in his life—at least not in a good way—and lacking any real male role model. He told me stories of abuse and neglect that made me wonder how he made it as far as he did. He was open and revealing about his life, but soon the words gave way to tears—tears from hurting, tears from being hurt.

I have been thinking of him a lot since that moment. His story is so familiar; a story I hear too frequently.

The following day, I had a meeting with someone who worked for the State of Illinois. She was working on legislation to combat carjacking and gun violence. There is a strong push to transfer children into adult court—it is the call to “get tough on crime.” As she spoke of her desire to understand what was behind the increase in carjackings and gun violence, I told the story of Zabrien. After hearing his story, she began to tell her own story of her child who needed mental health services. She told of how she did everything in her power to get her child the help he required. Thankfully, she had the resources and relationships to ensure her son had what he needed. “I cannot imagine mothers who don’t have the resources that I have and how they are able to get the help they need?”

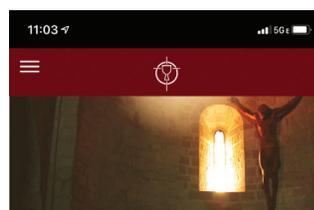
So often, what happens when you sit in these spaces—whether it be around a kitchen table or behind the locked door of a cell—is that we begin to get a glimpse of the complexities of things. We begin to learn and understand that the person is much more than an issue to be tackled. We begin to see our shared humanity in one another.

And what is it to be human? I believe it is to be a part of a family—one that is imperfect, yet so capable of love. All of us have been both victim and offender in this human family, yet neither our wrongdoings nor our wounds can define us. I cannot put on the mantle of being a victim as though that is who I am now. I do not deny my suffering and hurt, but I am more than my pain and loss. Equally, I cannot allow any singular act to define who I am as a person. One who steals is not a thief, one who kills is not a murderer. It doesn’t discount the harm done; it demands accountability, but in the end, are we not still members of this family?

Our Christian theology gives us the language and imagery we need to hold this tension. In Genesis 1:26, we hear that we were all created in the image of God, an identity that remains even after the fall of creation. No matter how bruised we get or how far we stray, God never stops calling us beloved children. In the New Testament, Paul writes, “... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). None of us are above the need for mercy, healing, and forgiveness. None of us is above or below the other; we are equals—sinners and saints alike. One messy human family deeply loved by God.

We are not as different from one another as we so often think. Wherever we are, whatever we are carrying, we can learn to see a bit of ourselves in one another, and remember that we belong to each other. And slowly but surely, we can recognize the goodness in one another and offer the mercy, forgiveness, and healing that we all require. ✦

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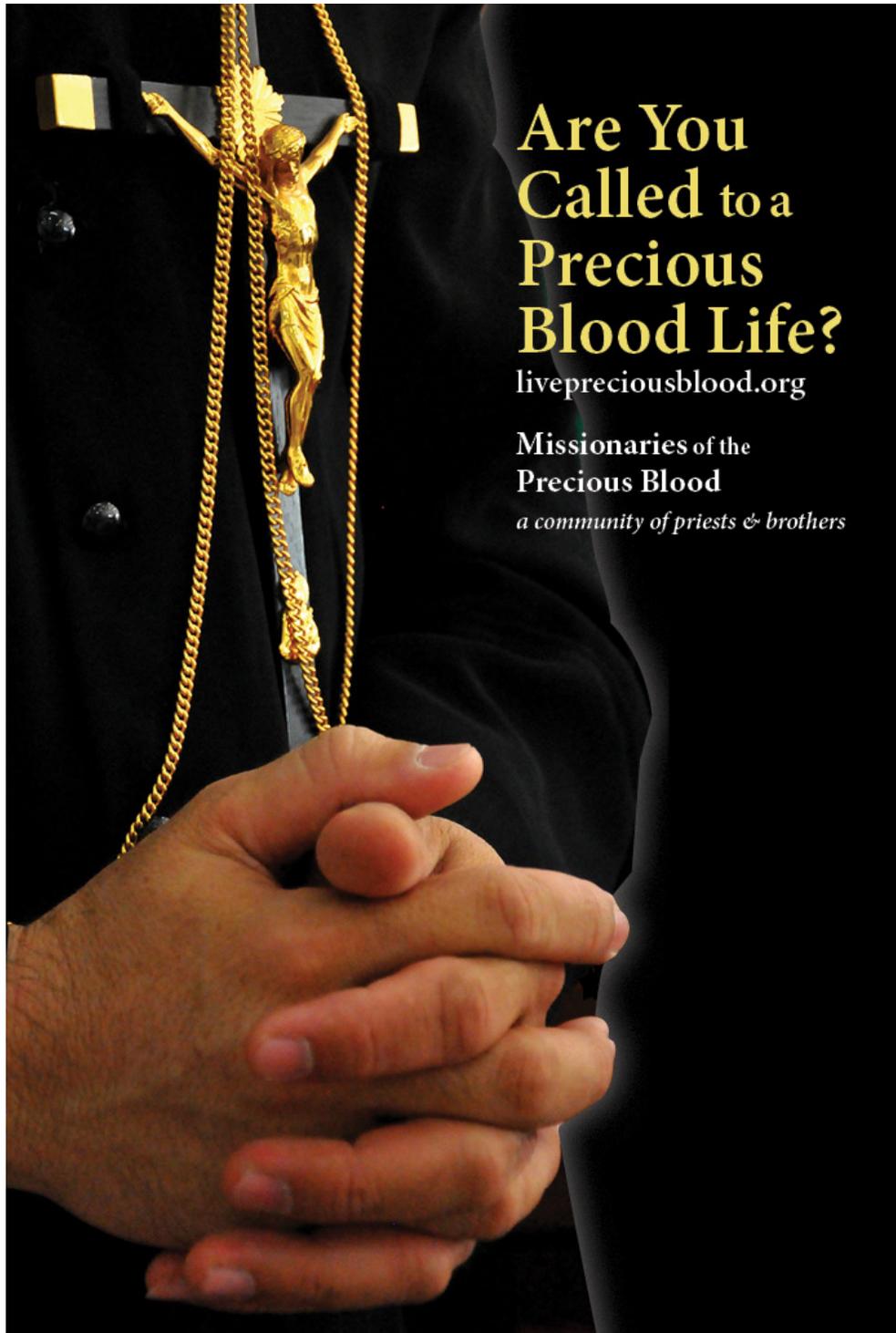
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