

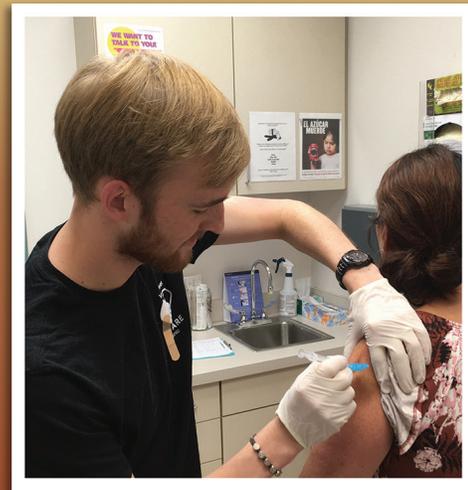
# THE **New Wine** PRESS

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Volume 31 No. 5 • January 2023



**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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## Contents

Journey to Epiphany .....	2
By Margaret Haik, Director of Communication	
Be the Light .....	3
By Fr. Jeff Kirch, C.P.P.S., Provincial Director	
Steps on the Journey .....	4
By Tim Deveney, Precious Blood Volunteers Director	
Gun Violence .....	6
By Companion Pam Demasi, Liberty, Missouri	
Crisis at the Border .....	8
By Gabino Zavala, Peace & Justice Ministry Director	
Celebrating Connections and Differences .....	10
By Vicky Otto, Executive Director, Precious Blood Spirituality Institute	
“Can You Drink the Cup? Then Get on the Bus” .....	11
By Kevin P. Considine, Ph.D., Director, The Robert J. Schreiter Institute for Precious Blood Spirituality	
Wall of Remembrance .....	13
By Holly O’Hara, PBMR Communications	

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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 United States Province—incorporated members, covenanted Companions, and candidates—united in prayer, service, and mutual support, characterized by the tradition of its 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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# Journey to Epiphany

*By Margaret Haik, Director of Communication*

During the winter holidays, a frequent family activity is to sit together and watch movies. Some favorites include “The Wizard of Oz,” “Harry Potter,” and “Star Wars.” One thing that strikes me about the movies my family enjoys is they all involve a protagonist on a journey with others in which they discover something about themselves or others.

Each of our articles this month has one or more of these elements: journey, interaction, or discernment.

Volunteer Director Tim Deveney relates the journey of Epiphany to the journey of discernment and discovery the United States Province is on.

Companion Pam Demasi shares her experience with gun violence and calls on the new province, members, and Companions to remember the Kansas City Province’s corporate stance against gun violence and to work for laws that can help reduce injury and death.

Peace and Justice Ministry Director Gabino Zavala recently participated in a border crossing experience where he heard the stories of the journeys of migrants. He also called on the new province to remember the Kansas City Province’s corporate stance on immigration reform and asks if it is time to discern a new ministry with migrants.

Companion Vicky Otto, director of the new Precious Blood Spirituality Institute, invites all to an upcoming event of prayer, discernment, and discovery of the similarities and differences of the spirituality of the various Precious Blood communities.

Kevin Considine, director of the Schreiter Institute at CTU, shares a journey he took this fall that allowed for a closer look at racism and the civil rights movement.

Lastly, Holly O’Hara, communications coordinator for PBMR, shares about walking through the pain of trauma with members of the PBMR community.

I hope the new year is one in which we, as father Fr. Jeff Kirch writes, see what is already there...Christ in each other. †

# Be the Light

By Fr. Jeff Kirch, C.P.P.S., Provincial Director

Often in life, we are oblivious to what is going on behind the scenes. This might be a blessing.

For example, you might have no idea what the average working day of even your closest friend or family member is like. They might tell you about some snarl at work or some challenge they met, something you were not even aware was part of their duties. Usually, their work has a lot more layers than you imagined.

Blissful unawareness is true of most of our daily lives. We drive on roads that civil engineers carefully planned to keep us safe. We grab items off store shelves, but we have no idea how they got there (well, until the past couple of years anyway). The teller at the bank cheerfully cashes our check, but we do not give a thought to whether the cash drawer balances at the end of the day.

Yet all that work, all that preparation and careful tending is going on.

Christmas can be viewed in the same way. We may have just heard the frantic countdown of shopping days remaining, as if Christmas were trying to sneak up on us. In fact, if we are wise, we took advantage of the blessed period of time the Church gives us every year, a time of preparation and intentional waiting. When Christmas arrives, we are prepared—whether all the presents are wrapped or not.

We know Christmas is coming and we anticipate its arrival, yet it brings with it a surprise. With the coming of Christ, our whole world changed. History is forever divided into before and after.

Recently, I was in a medical office where I was asked the name of my employer. When I said, “the Missionaries of the Precious Blood,” the worker looked up from her screen.

“Oh,” she said, “do you try to get people to join?”

If she meant, “Do you try to get people to join in the mission of telling the whole world about the redeeming power of Christ’s Precious Blood?” the answer is “yes.” If the question meant, “Are you

*continued on page 5*



# Steps on the Journey

By Tim Deveney, *Precious Blood Volunteers Director*

I have traveled a fair bit during the last 18 years, so I have my packing routine down pretty well. I have different routines for different types of trips. When I pack for recruiting trips to college campuses, I pack pants, button-down shirts, a dressy pair of shoes, and ties for when I'm feeling a bit saucy. If I'm heading to Chicago to visit our volunteers, I'm more of a nice shirt and jeans type of guy. I know to check the weather in every destination I'm going to. It always amazes me how different the weather can be between Chicago and South Bend.

Traveling requires me to think through some of the possible contingencies. Where do I stay that is both comfortable and responsible with the resources the United States Province trusts me with? What's the best route? Do I really want to pay the tolls to get to Notre Dame, or should I take an extra half-hour on the road to avoid the tolls? Should I rent a car or trust my skills in navigating public transportation? Do I have child care for my kids in the mornings before school? How am I going to get to and from the airport? (Thanks to my mother-in-law and father-in-law for regularly taking care of those last two items.)

Even with all the planning, there is a lot I cannot control. The traffic in Chicago is always a wild card. The places I stay might not be comfortable or quiet (There's a loud rooster that lived near our volunteers in the Back of the Yards neighborhood in Chicago!). There are usually some unique experiences, sights to see, or new food. I learned about the glory of kolaches thanks to former volunteer Lina Guerrero's parents in Austin, Texas. I have met some amazing people, some of whom I now count as confidants and friends.

Sometimes there are unexpected difficulties that come up. There are times when I feel tired and have to force myself to take that next step. I have been to recruiting fairs that no students show up to, leaving me with two to four hours of thinking about all the other work I have to do and the burden that my family is bearing because I'm traveling. At visits to our placement sites, I have to have unexpectedly difficult conversations with our volunteers or our placement contacts. Those conversations occasionally involve me

having to dive really deep into how I am working with those people.

In November, I traveled to Florida for the Catholic Volunteer Network annual conference. It was our first in-person meeting since 2019. During the conference, one of the participants shared the poem "For Those Who Have Far to Travel" by Jan Richardson during an opening prayer. It's a meditation on the journey of the Magi. It offered me a much different perspective on the journey the wise men took. She opens her poem:

*If you could see the journey whole  
you might never undertake it;  
might never dare the first step  
that propels you  
from the place you have known  
toward the place you know not.*

The story of the Epiphany only appears in Matthew's Gospel. The "wise men from the East" only appear briefly in Matthew's infancy narrative. The author of Matthew's Gospel gives them only two more sentences than Joseph, whose silence makes the wise men seem verbose. The unnumbered group undertakes a journey whose destination they do not know.

They appear in Jerusalem to get directions. When they arrive in Bethlehem, they give their gifts to Jesus and offer him homage. They renege on their promise to Herod after having dreams in which angels warn them Herod's intentions are not good. They end up going home a different way. They are a group of people



who appear quietly in Matthew's Gospel, and after giving their gifts and offering homage to Jesus, they just as quietly disappear.

What was their journey like? What did they pack? What new foods did they taste? Who were the people (besides those in Herod's court and the Holy Family) they met on their journey?

How did they feel on their journey home? Did they feel the exhilaration of getting a glimpse of God's love, or did they feel let down that God's glory was in a child born to a young peasant woman and a carpenter instead of in a palace? Were their lives changed by their journey and those they met at their destination? How did they push through when they were tired, thirsty, or hungry?

We are all on journeys, maybe not as profound as the wise men, but journeys nonetheless. Our community is on a journey of discernment and discovery of how we are to witness Christ's reconciliation in the world. Ultimately, this is a journey of love, inspired by the love of a God who gave us his Son to bring peace, mercy, justice, and truth. The road is hard, but like the wise men, we need to continue on even if we do not know the steps ahead of us. We probably do not even know the place we are going to! Throughout it all, we need to trust the slow work of God and be open to God's love being revealed to us in unusual ways. †

## Precious Blood Renewal Center

### Matthew's Insights into Jesus

January 14-16

### Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Tuesday, January 24, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Visit [pbrenewalcenter.org/events](http://pbrenewalcenter.org/events)  
for more information.

*All times are Central Time Zone.*

### *Leadership, continued from page 3*

trying to convert people?" I guess the answer is still yes, but not in the way we used to understand that process.

What I would have liked to have said is this: "As missionaries, both members and Companions, we are called to help others see and experience Christ in their lives." We do not "bring" God to anyone. We believe that God is already at work in every life. By our words and actions, can we help people see what is already there? Can we walk with them and sometimes hold up a light for them, the light that Christ brought into the world?

Christ came into the world and changed everything, and we are still trying to understand how all that works. Lucky for us, Christ is a patient teacher. Like all good teachers, if one method does not work, Christ tries a different way to reach us, never giving up. His birth, his life, his public ministry, his painful, sorrowful death on the cross, and his triumphant resurrection—all of those layers of his life with us are meant to instruct and illuminate. We grab onto what we can understand, and we share it with others. It is our job to tell them there is hope and mercy in this world because God planned it that way. If we can help them see that, if we can hold up the light that is Christ for a world that is often dark and dangerous, then we will have done our job.

Our Precious Blood spirituality impels us to proclaim the Paschal mystery that Jesus was born and lived and died and rose again so we too can live fully and freely. We do not always understand it, but we know it to be so. We do not always feel we have the power to hold up the light of Christ on our own, but we find that power through Christ. Saint Gaspar was born on the Epiphany, the great feast of the manifestation of Christ. This feast celebrates Christ being known in the world. It celebrates people seeing Christ for who he is, our Savior.

Where do you see Christ today, and where can you help others see Christ? And, especially as Missionaries of the Precious Blood, how do we see Christ in each other? †

# Gun Violence

By Companion Pam Demasi, Liberty, Missouri

My first experience with gun violence came in November 2002. It happened at St. James in Liberty, Missouri—my grandchildren's school. A father shot and killed his son who had jumped in front of his mother to protect her. The mother was wounded. The rest of the 322 students were in lockdown.

They were soon shuffled out the back of the school and to the nearby movie theater. My daughter and I were out shopping and saw the commotion of helicopters in the air over St. James. We raced down the highway to see what was happening. I had a feeling of utter helplessness. We found the grandchildren at the theater, unharmed.

Today everywhere we look, gun violence is decimating our families and communities. Whether it's the mass shootings in shopping malls, concerts, schools, and places of worship; the retaliatory gun violence in urban neighborhoods haunted by the legacy of economic disinvestment, racism, and poverty; or the solitary suicides committed nationwide with increasing frequency, gun violence adds up: More than 100 Americans die from it every day. More people have died from gun violence in the United States since 1968 than in all the wars in United States history. (Gun Violence in America Everytown Research & Policy <https://everytownresearch.org> )

The massacre of 26 children and teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012 could have been a turning point. It seemed that the scale of the tragedy and the number of very young victims would provide momentum for real action on gun

*Memorial at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Wikimedia Commons*



reform. Even when a tragedy like the Buffalo grocery store shooting in May makes national headlines, the focus is often on the ideology that motivated the shooter rather than on how the shooter acquired the weapons.

The political divide seems to deepen with each new attack. One side declares it is time for more stringent gun laws. The other side doubles down on unrestricted gun access. Given our world's social and political climate, it has never been more imperative that everyone learns to engage in the hard work of challenging conversations to disrupt bias and understand each other's unique experiences and perspectives, however different they are from our own. We must reframe the debate so the political will required to address the issue can emerge. Most of us do not want to see gun violence on our streets and in our workplaces, homes, and schools.

Colorado Governor Jared Polis, whose state suffered a mass shooting at a gay nightclub in November 2022, said American society needs to "take the best ideas from all sides that work" in preventing gun violence. Of course, it's about mental health. Of course, it's about gun policy. Of course, it's about anti-LGBTQ rhetoric. It's about all these things," Polis said. Polis said state laws, including red flag laws, need to be enforced, citing both the Club Q shooting and yet another mass shooting at a Boulder grocery store last year.

Pennsylvania Representative Brian Fitzpatrick also said there is not one solution to gun violence. "The reality," he said, "is that we have an epidemic here in the United States that is not being experienced in any other country in the world. And there are a lot of reasons for that. I think people try to oversimplify the problem. The key is to make sure that every single tragedy gets unpacked, and [we] figure out what the problem is with that individual tragedy."

We need a response to crime that does not perpetuate the cycle of violence.

For most of the 20th century, gun policies did not revolve around mass shootings. The first attempts to create a firearm ownership registry in the 1930s were

inspired by the violent exploits of gangsters like Al Capone. The sweeping Gun Control Act of 1968, which prohibited most felons from owning guns and which the National Rifle Association called “reasonable,” was a response to the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy. The 1993 Brady handgun bill mandated background checks and waiting periods for handgun purchases in an effort to tamp down violence in major cities. The lone exception to this rule was the 1994 assault weapons ban, inspired by a mass shooting in San Francisco. The ban lasted for 10 years before it expired. (Ironically enough, the mass shooting that inaugurated the modern gun control debate happened during the life span of the ban, not after it expired: The shooters at Columbine used shotguns, a carbine rifle, and a semi-automatic pistol.)

After an initial attempt to reimpose an assault weapons ban went up in smoke, West Virginia Democrat Joe Manchin and Pennsylvania Republican Pat Toomey worked together on a compromise bill that would expand background checks and close the loophole that allows would-be gun purchasers to avoid background checks if they buy from so-called private sellers at events like gun shows.

But Sandy Hook activated the fight-or-flight responses. At first, the NRA collaborated with the bill’s co-sponsors to fine-tune the language. Then something shifted. The NRA’s membership found the bill outrageous, and they threatened to abandon the organization if it continued to cooperate. The organization pulled its support for the bill; the bill fell a few votes short of the 60 it needed to pass—and vanished. We need a robust policy analysis, and we need to have conversations with a broad range of stakeholders about what is needed to be safe.

Here are some current Gun Violence Reduction/Prevention Bills under consideration:

- S.591, S. 529, H.R. 5427 - Background Checks and bump stock bills
- H.R. 2510, S. 1108 - Keep Americans Safe Act
- H.R. 1808, S. 736 - Assault Weapons Ban

Check the bills out and let your congressional representatives know where you stand.

The Kansas City Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood adopted a corporate stance against gun violence in November 2017 :

*Motivated by the Blood of Christ and called to be ministers of reconciliation, we, the Missionaries and Companions of the Precious Blood, Kansas City Province, affirm our belief in the sacredness of life. Present laws making it possible for uncontrolled and unlimited access to weapons and ammunition of any amount and any type do not foster a culture of life. Local, state, and national legislators must pass reasonable laws that will curb the culture of violence tearing apart the fabric of our nation. The “cry of the Blood” (Genesis 4:10) demands we do no less. We come together to confront evil manifested by the culture of violence.*

*Bonded in charity, we seek to create a safe environment for our children by promoting a culture of life and peace. We advocate for measures that reflect our founder St. Gaspar’s message: “Try to make every effort to bring everything to a peaceful solution.” Therefore, we will encourage and support the following measures to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to keep weapons out of the hands of those who seek to harm others:*

- *Require background checks on all gun purchases*
- *Enforcement of gun trafficking laws*
- *Pass laws banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines*
- *Pass laws to fund violence prevention programs*
- *Do not support any measures increasing armed guards in schools*
- *Make gun safety education necessary for owning a gun*

We need to learn how to deescalate violence and interrupt it. What can help us do this? Can we shift how we see this problem? Can we open our hearts, our minds, and our imaginations to reject gun violence?

The time is now to keep our children and communities safe. Each week we shake hands with people and wish them peace. People from different racial, social-economic, generational, and political backgrounds wish for God’s presence in one another’s lives. Real peace exists when there is justice, restoration, and forgiveness. ✠

# Crisis at the Border

By Gabino Zavala, Justice and Peace Director

The Biden administration points to a number of accomplishments thus far in his presidency. A list of these accomplishments would include the Inflation Reduction Act, Improved Health Care for Veterans, CHIPS and Science Act, action on gun violence, bipartisan Infrastructure Act, action to combat the climate crisis and reduce emissions, and expansion of health care to millions of Americans, to name a few.

One issue missing from this list is any movement, change, or legislation that addresses our broken immigration system, even though this was one of the issues the president said he would address in his administration. Everyone in Congress and the administration is quick to point fingers, lay blame, and use our broken immigration system to attack each other. No one has the courage to take on the enormous task of dealing with our broken immigration system because it is easier to kick the can down the road.

Let us be clear: There is a crisis at the border. However, the crisis is not a horde of invaders illegally crossing our border to take our jobs, sponge off our social services, and diminish the quality of our lives. The crisis is not “them” versus “us.” The crisis at the border is the result of our government’s mismanagement of migrants at the border.

People migrate for humanitarian reasons, but we insist on demonizing and criminalizing them instead of responding to the very real situation. The crisis needs to be addressed by a bipartisan, comprehensive reform of our immigration system. Until that happens, the crisis will continue with such disasters as Title 42 (which continues to impact the inadequately staffed asylum system), the separation of families, the transportation of asylum seekers across the country, and a lack of laws addressing the present reality. U.S. policies that continue to exclude people from seeking protection in the U.S. is not a fair and humane immigration system. Our system should work to legally welcome people with dignity and compassion.

The focus should not be on keeping all those people out of our country. We need immigrants. We need

immigrants to work in a number of industries, including agriculture, janitorial services, hospitality, food service, and health. We should be managing the influx of immigrants in a way that benefits our country and welcomes those immigrants who have much to offer our community.

As Missionaries of the Precious Blood, we are committed to working with the poor and marginalized. The migrants at our border are among the poor and marginalized. Recently, I had an opportunity to cross the border into Mexico and visit a center for migrants. There were 400 people in this center, mostly women and children, from Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and various regions of Mexico. Their stories are full of suffering, violence, poverty, and the unknown. But their stories are also filled with hope.

I listened to Olivia, a young woman from El Salvador who had left her family and small village, by herself, to make the journey from El Salvador across Mexico to the U.S. border. Her family lives in poverty, and she is hoping not only to have a future but also to help her family.

I spoke to Isabel from Honduras, who escaped an abusive husband and his abusive family. She felt the only way she and her child could survive was to look for a better place.

I spoke with Cesar, a 17-year-old from Honduras, who is trying to escape the pervasive gang culture, the drugs, and the lack of employment. He is longing for a future.

Another migrant, Pilar, shared with me that in the middle of the night armed men showed up at her house in Guanajuato, beat her and her husband, knocking out her teeth. The men took her husband; she does not know what has happened to him for two months now. She has escaped this violence with her children and grandchildren.

All these people have similar stories of poverty, violence, despair, and hopelessness. All of them are

looking desperately for a better life. Are these people not among the poor and marginalized that we are called to serve?

The Kansas City Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood took a corporate stance in 2017 committing ourselves as a province to work for just and comprehensive reform of our broken and unjust immigration system. Although there is no longer a Kansas City province and we are now one province—the United States Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood—the words of this corporate stance still hold true and can guide our work and ministry:

*As Missionaries and Companions of the Precious Blood - Kansas City Province, we are compelled by our charisms of reconciliation, hospitality, and ministry of the Word for the renewal of the Church. We are motivated by the Gospel message (“For I was a stranger and you welcomed me,” Matt. 25:35) and inspired by our founder, St. Gaspar (“Please, I urge you not to abandon the poor who are the image of Jesus Christ.”) We remember that we are a nation of immigrants. In light of these roots and our commitment to social justice, we affirm the rights of all immigrants to be treated with dignity and respect. We call on all government leaders to work together to establish compassionate and comprehensive immigration reform legislation. This legislation should:*

- *Provide a timely path to legal status for undocumented persons in the country*
- *Preserve family unity as a cornerstone for our national immigration system*
- *Provide for just and legal paths for immigrant laborers to come and work in the U.S.*
- *Restore due process protections to our immigrant enforcement policies*
- *Address the root causes of migration within sending countries and explore long-term solutions*

*We empower the Justice and Peace Committee to develop an action plan for the congregation to implement the core beliefs expressed in our stance.*

Now is the time for us to continue to advocate for just and comprehensive reform of our immigration system. We must call our congressional representatives and the administration and urge them to address

this crisis of mismanagement and failed laws. We need to encourage the lawmakers and directors of policy. We need to work toward a system of laws that treats all with dignity and compassion and serves both the needs of the U.S. and immigrants.

As I am drafting this article at the beginning of December, during the lame duck term in Congress, a bipartisan group of senators is working to push through legislative possibilities that have been near completion for the last two years. One is a resolution for Dreamers and the other is the Farm Workforce Modernization Act. This legislation is an opportunity to address an important piece of our broken immigration system. But we cannot stop there.

As Precious Blood Missionaries, we are being called to discern and reflect on our ministries. It is a time for us to plan and strategize as we consider where the spirit is calling us. With this in mind, members of the Justice and Peace Committee have been to an immersion experience at the border in El Paso. We have also crossed the border to visit the migrant center across the California border into Mexicali, Mexico, to engage with the migrants and those who are giving hospitality to these migrants.

In February, 12 members of the Precious Blood family, members, Companions, and Adorers of the Blood of Christ will be making a trip to Las Cruces, New Mexico, for an immersion experience with Border Servant Corp., a Lutheran immigration ministry to “listen, learn, and engage” with immigrants, local organizations, local organizations, border patrol agents, and legal and economic agents who work on the border with immigrants. If we are to welcome the stranger in our midst, it is important that we try to understand the causes of migration and our nation's response to immigrants.

Could this not be a time for us to consider ministry with the immigrants at the border? Could it not be a time to consider ministry to the immigrant in our midst? We are missionaries. As missionaries, we are called to proclaim the Word of God that we carry in our hearts. As missionaries, we are called to preach and put this word into practice.

*continued on page 12*

# Celebrating Connections and Differences

By Vicky Otto, Executive Director, Precious Blood Spirituality Institute



**Precious Blood**  
SPIRITUALITY INSTITUTE

I have a large, extended family in Arizona. When we gather, one of the younger generations always wants to hear the family stories.

Storytime has become a cherished tradition of our family celebrations. The children are curious to know about how their parents acted as children. It is always funny when the stories get shared because they change slightly depending on whose version you are hearing. Everyone gets the basics of the story correct, but each teller adds a little embellishment to make their story unique. The one constant among all the stories is the love that is shared. That's what makes this time special.

As a Precious Blood family, we come from a long line of storytellers. Our faith, scriptures, and beliefs all began through the process of sharing our stories. Our sacred scriptures exist because the stories of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection were first shared among the community by those who were the direct witnesses. The stories were passed on from generation to generation until written records were kept.

The founders of our communities began their journeys drawn to those sacred scriptures. Just as they do today, those messages propelled our founders in their journeys of faith and as they formed the communities that comprise our Precious Blood family. We now stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. We are encouraged by the stories of scripture and strengthened through our relationship with God. This encouragement propelled us to share our stories with the world today.

Precious Blood spirituality became known because our founders—Gaspar, Maria, Mother Theresa, and Mother Brunner—recognized the wonder of this spirituality and shared it with others. I can only imagine what those early communities must have been like as they began embracing this spirituality, especially because they didn't have the benefit of a Google search!

Yet they prayed, discerned, talked, and challenged each other as everyone pushed to the next horizon.

Throughout the centuries, these times of sharing continued and our spirituality was passed from generation to generation, becoming even more substantial and profound. In each era, even to this day, the problems of the world seem enormous. Our ancestors recognized that Precious Blood spirituality could help in their times. Today, we inherit that mission to share our spirituality in the hopes that it can be a balm for our fractured and battered world.

Sharing the gifts and blessings of Precious Blood spirituality with the world is one of the goals of the Precious Blood Spirituality Institute. To be charged with keeping the gift of Precious Blood spirituality alive was somewhat daunting. This task did not seem as intimidating when it became apparent that we don't do it alone; we do it together with all of you who make up our Precious Blood family. We stumbled on the surprise of diversity. Like a kaleidoscope, the unique ways we define our spirituality and the ways we join together are a joy to behold. To celebrate this in the footsteps of our ancestors, we too believe that we need to come together.

As our Institute begins, we believe that we need to come together to pray, discern, and challenge each other about the gifts of our spirituality. It is in that spirit that I invite you to join us for "Coming Together, Celebrating Connections and Differences." This event will be held Saturday, March 18, 2023, at the Precious Blood Renewal Center in Liberty, Missouri. A panel of representatives from our communities will offer different perspectives about our spirituality. There will also be opportunities for questions and discussions.

Can't make it to Kansas City? There are two other ways to view the event. You can join us via Zoom on March 18. The event will be taped and available later on our website. Invitations and more information about this event will be available later in January. To learn more about this event and other activities of the

*continued on page 12*

# “Can You Drink the Cup? Then Get on the Bus”

By Kevin P. Considine, Ph.D., Director, The Robert J. Schreiter Institute for Precious Blood Spirituality

“Can you drink the cup?”

This is a central question of much of Precious Blood Spirituality, and Fr. Ben Bertini expounded upon it movingly in the October issue. He concluded that when Jesus asks, “Can you drink the cup?” our response should be simple: “How can we not?”

I was reminded of Fr. Ben’s question because I recently returned from what is called a Sankofa Journey (<https://covchurch.org/mercy-justice/sankofa/>) hosted by the “Love Mercy Do Justice” initiative of the Evangelical Covenant Church. It is a four-day, prayer-filled visit to civil rights sites in the South that also includes relationship building and reflection as individuals, partners, and small and large groups. Riders of different racial backgrounds are partnered up for the journey through major museums, monuments, and locations of the Black Freedom Struggle in the South. Although most Catholics have probably never heard of them, this denomination is engaged in some of the most effective work in racial justice in the U.S. today.

The Covenant Church calls this an “immersive discipleship experience.” It’s similar to what Catholics call a pilgrimage. It is four days in which participants leave ordinary time and enter into a liminal space where transformation can occur through journeying as a community in God’s presence. The idea is that God has been, is, and will continue to be working for racial justice and reconciliation and that God asks us to drink the cup and participate in the work.

This discipleship journey is a deep dive into both the horrific evils wrought by white supremacy over the past 400 years and the countless creative ways in which people, mostly Black people and some white accomplices in the South, have flowed with God’s Spirit for resistance, liberation, and a measure of salvation in this world.

Sankofa Journey finds inspiration from the Freedom Rides of 1961 when young people, Black and white, who were dedicated to testing the segregation tradition focused upon interstate bus rides with their

very bodies. Since bus segregation had been declared illegal many years earlier, they would conscientiously challenge the segregation norms that continued, despite the illegality of those norms. “Get on the bus” was a catchphrase of the Freedom Riders and also is echoed through Sankofa’s invitation to “get on the bus.”

The original Freedom Riders faced great hardship. Blacks and whites would ride together and then bleed together as white mobs met the buses in the South and brutally attacked anyone and everyone on board. Their innocent blood, spilled freely because of training in the discipline of nonviolence, was crucial for breaking the back of legal segregation in the South and ushering in what they hoped would be an integrated world of greater justice. For example, when buses stopped in Anniston, Alabama, one bus was firebombed. The riders who fled from the burning bus were met by an army of Ku Klux Klan members and other white supremacists who were armed with all kinds of weapons.

My Sankofa Journey was challenging, albeit in a much different way from the journey of the original Freedom Riders. The ethnic background of my extended family is German-Irish and British-Irish, which means I have been racialized as white. This also means that my experience was much different from my partner’s and the experiences of many others on the bus who are not white. For me, much of the journey was a paschal pilgrimage through the monstrous effects of racism and racialization upon enslaved Africans, their white enslavers, and the society that grew from this original sin that we now call the United States.

Similar to the Freedom Rides, the mode of transport for Sankofa was a bus. Each participant was paired with a partner of the same gender but different racial background. The four-day journey began in Atlanta, at a Covenant church. From there, we traveled to Montgomery and Birmingham, Alabama; Memphis, Tennessee; and back to Atlanta. In each city, we visited major civil rights historical locations such as the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change and Ebenezer Baptist Church.

*continued on page 12*

In a way, we followed the via crucis and descent into hell that African peoples were forced into as they were stolen and racialized into enslaved property. The call to drink from the cup of Christ is also the call to be part of Christ's ministry of healing and reconciliation: "to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19). This cup that Christ asks us to drink is also the cup of pursuing justice and reconciliation in the midst of horrific suffering and evil. In particular, it asks us to dive into the origins of the wounds that we all carry from the effects of sin and evil.

The cup asks us to do this, but not because God wants us to be overcome by despair and defeated by our feelings of powerlessness when facing the great abyss of human suffering. No, the cup asks us to do this for the same reason a doctor must be exposed to the grotesqueness caused by human disease and bodily injuries. If we do not have sufficient understanding of the cause and severity of a wound, or how a particular disease is manifesting and impacting a particular patient, we have no means for discerning the medical techniques for healing the wounds or the correct medicine to cure the disease.

In this ministry of healing and reconciliation, a deep wound that everyone in the U.S. carries is the wound of racialization. The manifold ways in which it has ruptured the tissue of human connectedness runs deep. Its symptoms and causes often are misdiagnosed or ignored altogether. Its origin is in the "doctrine of discovery" promulgated by 15th-century popes and the ensuing work of colonization, genocide of native peoples, and the enslavement of African peoples. If this were not enough, a new way of understanding the human being was invented in order to attempt to justify the horror and barbarism of the colonizers who claimed Christianity as their religion: the human person was racialized. Differences in skin pigmentation, whose source was the melanin content of the skin, now were interpreted as a marker of separation between those who were deemed more human and those they deemed less human.

This racialization began theologically long before it was secularized into philosophy and science to justify what can never be justified: the denigration

of our fellow human beings who carry the *imago dei* from persons to non-persons; from God's children to "slaves" and "savages"; from fully human to somehow less than human based on a sliding scale of whiteness. In this way, we all were and continue to be wounded by racialization, even though our experiences of it differ greatly depending upon the color of our skin. With this in mind, Fr. Ben's reminder of Jesus' question, "Can you drink the cup?" is timely. It is a challenging invitation to follow the way of Jesus and partake in the Paschal mystery.

So, for me, a man racialized as white, Jesus' question of "Can you drink the cup" was recontextualized. It became the prophetic question of "Can you get on the bus?" Can you join the work of anti-racism, resistance to white supremacy, and reexamining the world in which you live in order to help facilitate the common good of our brothers and sisters of color?

I pose the question to readers who, like me, have been racialized as white: Can you drink from the cup of Christ? Hopefully, our answer echoes that of Fr. Ben: How can we not?

Kevin adapted this article from one he wrote for National Catholic Reporter, [ncronline.org](http://ncronline.org). ✠

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*Connections and Differences, continued from page 10*  
Institute, I invite you to visit our website:  
[pbspiritualityinstitute.org](http://pbspiritualityinstitute.org).

As our New Year begins, may we go forth with the same conviction of our ancestors and share the graces and blessings of our spirituality. It is what our world needs. ✠

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*Crisis at the Border, continued from page 9*

I am an immigrant. As such, I have dealt with immigrants and immigration issues my whole life. When I came to the U.S. with my family, the immigration laws served us well—and I would say they served this country well. We are now dealing with a crisis of mismanagement at our southern border. Our immigration system is broken. We must continue to work for comprehensive and just reform in our immigration laws. ✠

# Wall of Remembrance

By Holly O'Hara, PBMR Communications

One by one, people walked to the front of the room, carrying wooden crosses with the names of their loved ones written on the front and sides. Holding their mothers, fathers, children, sisters, brothers, and friends in their hands, each person spoke the name of their loved one aloud for all to hear and carefully placed their cross on the Wall of Remembrance.

I watched as a young girl I have come to know well walked up and spoke name after name into the microphone. She took her time, didn't rush, and made sure to read every name carefully and with intention. Not yet 18 years old, this little girl read upward of 15 names. Hot tears streamed down my face.

One of my greatest joys of being at PBMR is working with the youth—particularly the young women. They are brilliant, strong, creative, wise individuals who never cease to amaze me day after day. But in moments like these, I am reminded of the invisible but unbelievably heavy burden of trauma and pain these young people carry. Because of the neighborhoods they're born into, the dangers they face, and the color of their skin, they are burdened with a level of grief and loss I will never fully understand.

These kinds of wounds live beneath the surface—no one can see the trauma another person carries. Yet our wounds are crying out for someone to see, touch, and heal the broken pieces of our hearts. But where, when, and by whom can we let ourselves truly be seen? Is there anywhere or anyone safe enough to let our walls down and share our sorrow?

One mother spoke about how before leaving the house she puts on a full face of makeup in hopes of covering up the pain and depression she battles daily. Here in this room, her tears wiped away this protective mask and she shared how losing her husband, sister, and son, coupled with the stress of struggling to take care of her family, often feels like too much to bear. Folks in the front and back of the room nodded in understanding, communicating they too feel what she feels. By sharing our wounds with one another,



*Fr. Dave Kelly, C.P.S., in front of the Wall of Remembrance*

we didn't sink from grief. Instead, we found community and solidarity, which kept us afloat.

There is a deep need and hunger for sharing our wounds in the context of community—to let down walls and unpack the hurt. I also believe spaces safe enough for this type of healing are few and far between, especially for folks in our neighborhood. People have been hurt time after time, from such young ages. Although safety is a basic human need, our youth, parents, and families often lack safety of any kind—whether it be psychological, emotional, physical, or spiritual. Nowhere and no one feels safe, so people stay bottled up, wounded, and alone, unable to heal or move forward.

And we wonder why things aren't getting better.

This year, PBMR is focused on healing—on creating more spaces and places where people can be vulnerable and allow love to touch their wounds. If we want to bring healing to the visible exterior in our community, we have to begin with the invisible interior. We have to begin with seeing, hearing, and holding the hearts of those we love and becoming vessels of love and care for one another.

As the young woman placed her cross on the Wall of Remembrance, we began to see that all the crosses organically were forming the shape of a heart. The pain of loss and grief of our hearts was momentarily flooded with love. For a second, we gained a glimpse of the yoke being easier and the burden light. ✝

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is everything."  
-Saint Gaspar del Bufalo,  
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