

# THE New Wine PRESS

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Volume 31 No. 6 • February 2023





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



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The Society of the Precious Blood is a fraternal community of priests and brothers founded by St. Gaspar in 1815. Bonded through charity by a promise of fidelity, we are prayerfully motivated by the spirituality of the precious blood of Jesus Christ to serve the needs of the Church as discerned through the signs of the times and in the light of the Gospel.

The 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.

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Missionaries of the Precious Blood  
United States Province, Kansas City

Precious Blood Center  
P.O. Box 339  
Liberty, MO 64069-0339  
816.781.4344  
[www.preciousbloodkc.org](http://www.preciousbloodkc.org)

Editor, Layout & Design  
Margaret Haik  
[communications@preciousbloodkc.org](mailto:communications@preciousbloodkc.org)

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## A New Season

By Margaret Haik, Director of Communications, Kansas City

*To everything turn, turn, turn.  
There is a season turn, turn, turn.  
And a time to every purpose under Heaven.*

With all due respect to the NRSV Catholic Edition of the Bible, I like the Byrds' version of chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes better.

This is my final edition working on the *New Wine Press*, and soon my final day with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood will arrive.

I am forever grateful to Fr. Joe Nassal and Fr. Dick Bayuk for giving me the opportunity to work for the Kansas City Province. Under their guidance, I refined my skills in print layout to the point where we redesigned the *New Wine Press*, taking it from its early designs as a newsletter to a magazine. This job gave me the chance to explore website development and client management systems.

I am grateful to Fr. Dick and also to Fr. Keith Branson for their mentorship. I appreciate their willingness to always be sounding boards as I took over the publication of the *New Wine Press*.

Tim Deveney, Vicky Otto, Gabino Zavala, Dennis Coday, and Fr. Timothy Armbruster have been wonderful collaborators on the editorial board, recruiting writers, and contributing to the *New Wine Press*. I hope that whatever direction the *New Wine Press* takes, they will be part of its development.

*"Let us allow God to act; He brings things to completion when we least expect it."*  
—St. Vincent de Paul

I will hold with fondness and gratitude all the skills I learned about communications and the lessons I absorbed about community life. I will use them to work on behalf of another wonderful religious community as communications director for the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

Fr. Joe Nassal is leading a commission to study the future of communication efforts in the new province. Upon my resignation, the *New Wine Press* will go on hiatus until the commission finishes its work.

So, after 11 years with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, it is time for a new season. I wish you all well and may the future of the United States Province be blessed. ☩

# Mindfulness and Ministry

By Fr. Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S., Vice-provincial Director

St. Gaspar wrote to his missionaries about his desire to “become more and more a man of prayer, of interior life, of a great union with God.” He believed that prayer is “the fountain of all good things,” often preferring healthy doses of silence “to listen to the voice of God.” Gaspar taught that prayer “is the mystical key for every good work.”

Gaspar’s reflections on prayer came to mind when I read about a gathering in early January in Hue, Vietnam, to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Thich Nhat Hahn. More than 1,000 Buddhist monks, nuns, and followers of Thich Nhat Hahn gathered at the Tu Hien Temple in Hue to remember and honor one of the world’s greatest spiritual leaders who died Jan. 22, 2022, at the age of 95.

The writings of Thich Nhat Hahn have informed my spiritual journey since I was involved with the Catholic Peace movement Pax Christi, which was based in Chicago when I was a student at Catholic Theological Union. He emphasized the absolute necessity of practicing compassion and that peace begins with mindfulness, with finding one’s center, and with paying attention to the God moments that are always present if we take the time to look.

Hahn believed that true and lasting change in the world begins by each of us reclaiming our identity and dignity as children of God. It is through mindfulness that we can learn to live in peace with ourselves and others.

After studying Buddhism for seven years, Hahn became a monk when he was 23. As a young monk, he attracted the attention of Thomas Merton. Their correspondence facilitated a Catholic-Buddhist dialogue, especially at a time when the Vietnam War was raging. These two monks—one Catholic, one Buddhist—practicing meditation and mindfulness in monasteries thousands of miles apart, brought a new awareness to people around a war-scarred world.

Hahn left Vietnam in 1966 and founded the Plum Village monastery in southern France. He traveled often to North America and throughout Europe and Asia to offer lectures on mindfulness and peace. During his first visit to the United States, he met not only Thomas Merton but also a young peace activist, Jim Forest. The Fellowship of

*continued on page 8*







*Sr. Donna Liette, center, with the mothers of PBMR at the “Front Porch”*

## Gathering on the “Front Porch”

*By Sr. Donna Liette, C.P.P.S., PBMR*

As a little girl growing up in North Star, Ohio, I remember sitting on our front porch and waving to all the people who passed by on Route 127. Being farmers, we would run to our porch swing on a rainy day and watch the rain watering our fields. On weekends and evenings, neighbors gathered on our porch to tell stories and enjoy some ice cream and warm pie that Mother had just baked.

Last week when the temperatures reached almost 50 degrees here in Chicago, I sat with one of our mothers on her porch as she recounted her granddaughter’s murder. She described the pain of going to the court hearings month after month and re-hearing the horror of the night. She cries: “Will the pain ever leave? Will I ever find healing?”

I leave her porch thinking of the differences in our porch conversations.

Today on 51st Street in the Back of the Yards, PBMR has opened a “Front Porch,” a warm, open space for neighbors, staff, and participants to gather, share stories, connect, be fed physically and spiritually, heal pain, and celebrate friendship.

After more than five years of vacancy at the location, many were waiting with great expectation for those doors to open. Neighbors stopped to ask: “Is this going to be a Church? An art center? Will you be selling liquor?”

Then on Nov. 8, the doors did open, and we celebrated the radical transformation of what was once a neighborhood grocery/liquor store into a no-steps, two-room gathering place to lift spirits—not sell them!

The space hosts circles of all kinds—mother’s healing circles, youth circles, RJ leadership circles,

support circles for men and women returning from prison, staff circles, drumming circles, community Mass circle, planning circles—all for the purpose of healing harm and building relationships.

Although precious blood continues to pour out on the streets we walk and the porches on which we stand, we invite the community into a safe place—a comfortable corner where they can share with others their suffering, their confusion, and their hopes—and know they are not alone.

Everyday I'm at the "Front Porch," someone new stops by, someone in need of healing, longing for a place of peace—a mother with two young children asking for prayer, a young father walking home from work. Young, old, rich, poor, neighbors curious to discover whether this is a place for them. Anyone who needs some water, coffee, chips, cookies, or a hug should come inside. All are welcome here!

For those who saw the chaos and smelled the stench when the doors first opened in late July, the transformation has been amazing. Rats had their way but quickly learned they had lost their home!

*Women at PBMR's "Front Porch"*



*Outside view of PBMR's "Front Porch"*

Neighbors, funders, board members, attorneys, and friends of PBMR have been welcomed into this new creation, and they stand with mouths open in amazement—sometimes even to the point of tears.

Mothers were especially excited because they could not believe there was a place in their community where they can find peace, where they can experience a "Spa Love Day," where pain and disappointments can be shared, where reconciliation can occur, where frustrations can be drummed out and one's brain can be cleared!

Summer will offer all kinds of activities and "Front Porch" experiences as we set up easels outside and the community comes together to paint, chat, and barbecue, knowing they are safe to leave their porches and get to know their neighbors and the community in a new way!

PBMR continues to hear the voices of the community and respond as best we can to the call of our spirituality to build a community where all are welcome; all are seen as "in" the circle; all are offered radical hospitality, hope, and healing. Those who feel "far off" will be brought to the "Front Porch" through the Blood of Christ.

We invite all of you to come, especially this summer, to sit on The Front Porch to see and to engage as we build a community of love. ✝



# A Humanitarian Crisis Calls for a Graced Response

*By Gabino Zavala, Director of Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation*

The news today is replete with stories about immigrants at our southern border crossing into the United States, sleeping on the streets, seeking asylum. The response of many has been to use the desperate situation of these people as political fodder and to demonize these immigrants.

What is needed, however, is a serious effort to pass a just and comprehensive immigration reform law to fix our broken system—a law that serves our country well but also responds humanely to the needs of these immigrants. What is needed in the short run is to help these asylum seekers with food, clothing, medical assistance, and help with transport to their sponsors.

Recently, the Kansas City Welcome Alliance (KCWA) did exactly this, welcoming 54 people from 15 families to Kansas City. The KCWA has given us an example of what Matthew's Gospel means when it

says, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." What the KCWA is doing aligns well with our spirituality as a Precious Blood Community.

As a Precious Blood Community, we are called to respond to the needs of those that live in the shadows and on the margins of our society. Certainly, these immigrants are those on the margins. At present, some members and Companions in our community are engaged in a discernment to see where God may be calling us to serve our immigrant brothers and sisters. How do we continue to work toward our corporate stance to promote just and comprehensive reform of our immigration laws? How are we being called to serve our immigrant sisters and brothers? Are we being called to sponsor asylum seekers?

Please read the following story of the work and experience of the KCWA.

## Kansas City Welcomes Asylum Seekers from the Border

*By Bill Cordaro and Ross Beaudoin, St. James Parish, Midtown Kansas City*

At 6 a.m. on Dec. 13, 2022, a bus with 54 people arrived in Kansas City, Missouri. These people had just finished a 16-hour journey from El Paso, Texas. Kansas City Welcome Alliance (KCWA) was there to receive its first group of asylum seekers from the southern border.

Emerging from the bus were 15 families: 24 adults and 30 children under the age of 16. They arrived with nothing more than the clothes they were wearing. At the border, immigration officials had confiscated everything they owned, ranging from clothing and baby formula to personal medications and identification from their country of origin.

More than 40 KCWA volunteers welcomed the families. A third of the volunteers were parishioners of St. James Parish. This Welcome Alliance Team was ready to feed our guests, provide them with clean clothes, a medical assessment, an opportunity to shower, and assistance with connecting to their sponsors elsewhere in the U.S.



*KCWA volunteers with a migrant family*

Eight families were from Nicaragua, five from Colombia, and one each from Ecuador and Bolivia. By the end of the first day, seven of the 15 families were already on their way to their sponsors, who were mostly located on the East Coast. Sponsors are responsible for airfare; however, if the sponsor can't afford all the airfare, KCWA is able to help.

The families remaining at the end of the day had a warm place to sleep and woke up to a hot breakfast. By





*A KCWA volunteer welcomes families and explains next steps in their journeys.*

the end of the second day, the remaining families were on their way to their sponsor's home, except one family. That family did not have a sponsor. Local agencies located one and within four days, the family was on its way to a sponsor in Chicago.

The facilities KCWA uses to welcome and house immigrants is a small central-city independent church. The pastor and congregation made every effort to ensure the guests' stay was a good experience.

Alongside the 40 volunteers of KCWA, more than a dozen nonprofit organizations worked to provide services to our guests. Early on the first day, the Advocates for Immigrant Rights and Reconciliation group gave a workshop entitled "Knowing Your Rights." This session outlined what our guests could expect as they worked their way through the immigration system.

This entire venture started with a simple "yes." In early August 2022, Ruben Garcia, the executive director of the nonprofit Annunciation House on the border in El Paso, Texas, contacted Deacon Ross

Beaudoin in Kansas City. Annunciation House assists asylum seekers with food, medical assistance, and clothing as well as help with getting to their sponsors located across the U.S.

Annunciation House was being inundated with asylum seekers and asked whether KCWA would be willing to accept a bus of asylum seekers and help them get to their sponsors. The answer was a definite "yes." St. James parish was advised of this opportunity to assist immigrants seeking asylum. The staff and parishioners responded positively right away. Parishioner Bill Cordaro asked to help and joined Ross Beaudoin in organizing the outreach.

Bill and Ross began envisioning what it meant to welcome and help asylum seekers reach the final leg of their trip: their sponsors' homes in the U.S. The two organizers followed two guiding principles:

1. The effort should be a broad community and interfaith experience (immigration is a human welfare issue affecting all).

*continued on page 9*

*Leadership, continued from page 3*

Reconciliation asked Forest to accompany Hahn throughout his speaking tour of college campuses, churches, and monasteries.

Forest, co-founder of the Catholic Peace Fellowship and later General Secretary for the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, died two weeks before Thich Nhat Hanh, on Jan. 13, 2022. He wrote several books, including biographies of several of my heroes—Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, and Daniel Berrigan—all of whom he knew very well. His last book, published in 2021 by Orbis Press, “Eyes of Compassion: Learning from Thich Nhat Hanh,” documents his journeys with Hahn from the time they first met in May 1966.

“I and many other peace activists tended to be prisoners on a conveyor belt of activity that often led to burnout, not only due to physical exhaustion but also because of compassion exhaustion,” Forest writes. “Being attentive to suffering on a daily basis is hard work. Many of us were overwhelmed by a sense of failure and futility.”

Thich Nhat Hanh taught Forest an important lesson, which all involved in the ministry of reconciliation and renewal that flows from our charisma and spirituality need to remember. We see so much suffering, encounter so many people in pain, and live in a world that is so polarized, where violence so often gets the upper hand, that we also experience “compassion exhaustion.” This is why it is so important to have a regular practice of prayer that nourishes our soul, deepens our relationship with God, and cultivates a spirit of mindfulness.

When we take time to be silent in God’s presence, our hearts are awakened and our awareness of God’s presence in others is heightened. Otherwise, we risk experiencing “compassion exhaustion” as we seek to carry out our ministry. As Thich Nhat Hanh wrote: “Those who are without compassion cannot see what is seen with the eyes of compassion.”

When we look through the eyes of compassion, we learn what Fr. Daniel Berrigan taught at the first Faith and Resistance retreat I attended almost 40

years ago. The retreat was organized for activists who were working for the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons even as the Cold War was fueling an escalation of these weapons of mass destruction. At the conclusion of the retreat, participants would engage in an act of civil disobedience by “crossing the line” at the Strategic Air Command base outside of Omaha.

In the discernment leading up to the action, Berrigan told us that unless we could look across the line and see the soldier or police officer who would be arresting us as a brother or sister and not the enemy, then do not cross the line, do not commit civil disobedience. This truth has stayed with me ever since. Jim Forest admits in his book that many in the peace movement “glared” at those “who supported the war, regarding them as enemies whom we would never find common ground.” But the teaching of Thich Nhat Hanh helped him and others “acquire a more sustained form of social activism.”

At the heart of the practice of prayer and meditation that leads to mindfulness is breathing, watching one’s breath. It sounds so simple, but it is true. As Forest writes, “It is like a mystery novelist’s idea of hiding diamonds in a goldfish bowl put in plain sight—a place too obvious, too public, to notice.”

The opportunities to practice mindfulness are available to us throughout the day. This is what Hahn taught: Whether we are mowing the grass, washing the dishes, driving the car, or riding the bus, mindfulness is about paying attention. Forest notes that spending time “in places dedicated to silence and stillness, like churches, monasteries, and retreat centers” isn’t important and necessary for mindfulness. It simply suggests that at several moments during one’s day we pause, take a breath, a breather. In the slogan from the old Coke commercial, mindfulness and prayer are the “pause that refreshes.”

Thich Nhat Hanh admitted to Jim Forest that when he was a young monk: “I was sometimes in an unbalanced state myself. There were times I was so focused on stopping the war that I didn’t give myself



time to notice such simple things as the flowers in front of me.” If we don’t seek this balance in our lives, Hahn said, “we will increase our own suffering and the sufferings of others.”

The teaching on prayer from St. Gaspar and Thich Nhat Hahn find their inspiration in Jesus’ advice to his disciples, which we read in Matthew’s gospel on Ash Wednesday: “When you pray, go to your inner room, close your door, and pray to your Father in private” (Matthew 6, 6).

As we enter the second month of this new year and approach the beginning of Lent, as we continue to open ourselves to the new possibilities for ministry and community in our new U.S. Province, may we take to heart the words of our founder St. Gaspar: “Ground yourself ever more firmly through prayer and humility, the sources of every good work.” ✠

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*KCWA, continued from page 7*

2. A sustainable structure for accepting buses in the foreseeable future needed to be put in place.

KCWA’s leadership team includes members from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities; civic groups; and others.

As a result of the Biden administration’s recent expansion of Title 42, crossings at the border have slowed to a point where buses are currently not being sent to the interior of the U.S. It is anticipated that when Title 42 is lifted, the border will once again be inundated, and the buses to Kansas City will resume. When this happens, KCWA is ready to help.

If a person wants to join the KCWA community, they can go to [KCWelcomeAlliance.org](https://KCWelcomeAlliance.org) and complete a volunteer form. Interested persons will be added to our mailing list for the next bus once they complete the form. Financial contributions may also be made to the effort through our webpage.

One of our volunteers aptly summed up the experience of volunteering:



*A father and child pass the time at the KCWA welcome site.*

“I think for a long time, Kansas City—due to its location and other historical/ demographic characteristics—has not seen itself as part of the United States’ immigration conversation. Engaging in activities like this shows that we all can have a role to play and that immigration and the policies around it impact us all.”

Prayer, education, and action for renewed immigration laws are essential throughout the process. ✠

*One of the children who was welcomed by KCWA*



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

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Join Us  
at the  
Table

"For me, life in community  
is everything."

-Saint Gaspar del Bufalo,  
founder

**Missionaries  
of the  
Precious Blood**

a community of  
priests & brothers

Find out more at  
[livepreciousblood.org](http://livepreciousblood.org)  
[vocations@cpps-preciousblood.org](mailto:vocations@cpps-preciousblood.org)