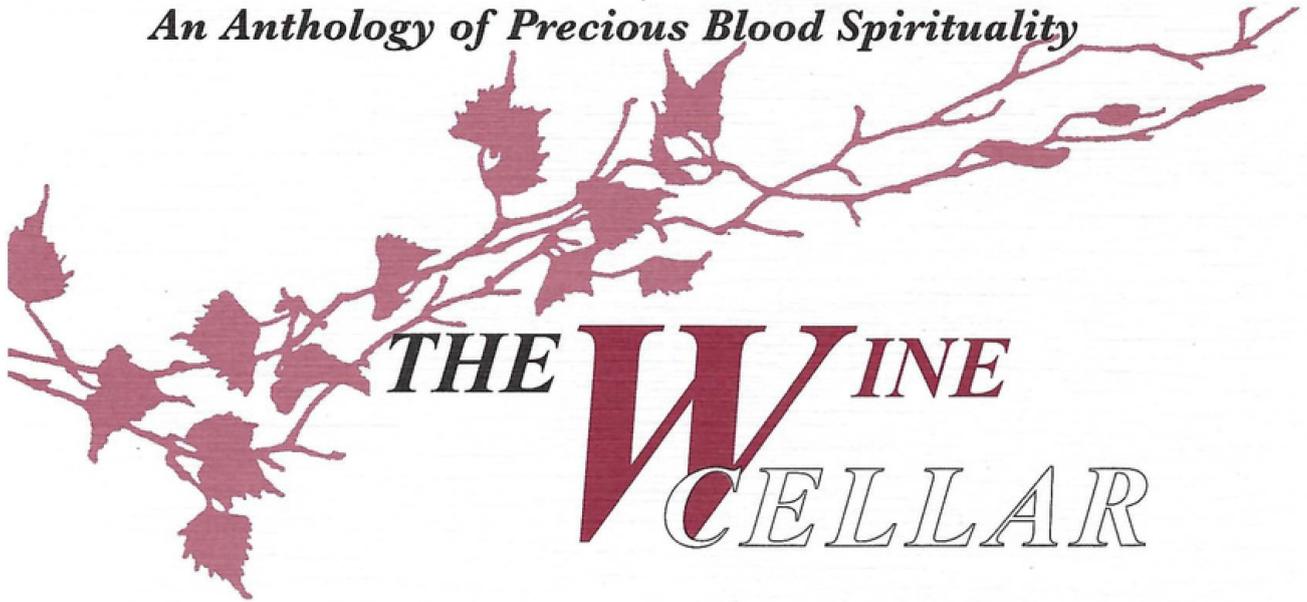


*An Anthology of Precious Blood Spirituality*



**THE** **W**INE  
CELLAR

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**Mission**

*The heart of Jesus  
is the wine cellar  
of the Blood of Christ*

**Gaspar del Bufalo**

*The  
Wine Cellar*

*An Anthology of Precious Blood Spirituality*

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From the

## *Wine Cellar*



By Joseph Nassal, CPPS

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### **Mission: Taking Hold of the Hand of God**

**T**he spirituality of the Precious Blood calls us to live in a new covenant of love. In chapter 31, the prophet Jeremiah traces the origin of this new covenant God desires to make with us by jogging our memory about the first covenant when God “took our ancestors by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt.” (v. 32).

This issue of *The Wine Cellar* proposes that the mission of those who claim the name and spirituality of the blood of Christ is to live this new covenant by taking God’s hand and being led to the places and the people where God wants us to go.

Reflecting on this image of “the hand of God,” there are some preachers who like to focus on the “backhand” of God as a way of explaining natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and tornadoes. The impression is that God’s hand is more prone to punish than to applaud or affirm the children of the earth. Some would have us believe that God is more likely to backhand us across the face rather than slap us on the back.

But Jeremiah paints a very different picture of the hand of God. The portrait of God is more like a mother grasping the hand of her child to protect her while crossing a busy street. God was not helping the chosen ones across a busy street, of course, but out of slavery and across a dry and barren desert. Still, the prophet portrays a God who is powerful and yet personal, infinite and intimate.

The infinite yet intimate nature of God is captured in the language of the covenant. A covenant, the prophet says, that is so personal it is no longer written on tablets of stone but written upon our hearts by the tender, compassionate hand of God. Jeremiah lovingly describes this relationship God desires to have with us: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”(v. 33)

We know from experience what happens when we know something “by heart.” We can learn a song or a prayer “by heart.” But sometimes this only means we learn it by rote—memorize the

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dos and don'ts, the doctrine and dates and history and tradition but never integrate into our lives. We can memorize for a test but once the test is taken we forget what we learned because we don't assimilate it or incorporate it into our life experience. If we only view our faith like students asking the teacher, “Will this be on the test,” then when the real tests in life come—the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, the death of a dream, the disintegration of a relationship—knowing the rules, the doctrine, the dogma by rote memory won't help us.

When we talk of knowing something or someone by heart, we are not talking about rote memory but relational memory. When we know someone by heart, we know the other on a deeper level because we have spent time with the other tracing each one's story. We have created a safe harbor for each other to take risks in speaking from the depths of one's heart. We are willing to sacrifice our own needs and wants for the sake of the other. We don't hide behind our fears or insecurities, are not afraid to name and claim our weakness, and don't pretend or put on masks.

When we know and are known by heart, we begin to understand the nature of the new covenant. A covenant God no longer writes on stone but on our hearts. And that is why, the prophet writes, “No longer will they have a need to teach their friends and relatives how to know God,” (v. 34) because once God writes the covenant of love upon our hearts, we shall know God.

In the seminary so many years ago, I learned much about theology and spirituality and doctrine and dogma but it wasn't until I rolled up my sleeves in ministry as a deacon in St. Joseph, MO or my first assignment as a priest in Centerville, IA that I began to understand how our mission is meant to reflect this new covenant of love. It is one thing to think about a ministry with the poor and another being overwhelmed by the generosity of parishioners who want to begin a food pantry at the parish. It is one thing reading about pastoral care and another holding the hands and praying with a family who's loved one is dying. It is one thing practicing and role-playing the sacrament of penance and another

sitting in a reconciliation room listening to the cries and sighs of one whose heart has been broken by sin. Then being able to pray the words of absolution because the nature of this covenant of love that God has made with us is expansive: “All, from the least to the great, shall know me,” God says. “For I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more.” (Jeremiah 31, 34)

The personal, infinite yet intimate quality of this relationship God desires with us is captured most eloquently in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Trusting we are known by heart, by God, will help us get through the crisis of our own crosses. We cannot separate ourselves from this relationship because as we pray in the Eucharistic Prayer of Reconciliation, God signed, sealed and delivered this covenant in the flesh and in the blood of Jesus “by a bond that can never be broken.”

Since this is the mission of Jesus—to show how God’s love is etched upon our hearts—this becomes our mission too. Once again, this love is expressed in the image of the hand of God—the hands of Jesus stretched out and nailed to the cross. This love is birthed in the water and blood that flowed from his side as he was hung out to die. This love is reflected in the cup that catches all our hope and all our hurt.

The spirituality of the precious blood shapes and sustains our mission. Our ministries are many and varied but they flow from the mission because the mission streams from the spirituality of the precious blood and charism of the congregation. More often than not, the surge of the spirituality takes us to the margins to find our mission. As Bill Delaney reflects on his experience in community organizing in

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south central Los Angeles, the meaning of our mission is not “to” the poor and abandoned, nor is our call a primary option “for” the poor. Rather, our mission is “with” those who are poor, abandoned, disenfranchised and

marginalized. “Community organizing means building power in our communities so that we can have a voice in issues that affect us,” Bill writes. “It means helping people know one another’s stories and then together decide what the community wants to achieve.”

Our mission is to identify those in our church and our world with whom our founders would stand with if he or she were alive now. Standing with the poor in her volunteer work at a homeless shelter in

Wichita, Adorer of the Blood of Christ Jacinta Langlois noticed the hands of those who signed in each night for a hot meal, sparking a poetic reflection, “The Hands of the Poor.”

Certainly Tim Coday stands in a place where Gaspar would stand—a stance Tim describes as “shoulder-to-shoulder” with the people of Tanzania. Tim traces his own vocation journey from serving as a brother at Precious Blood Seminary in Liberty to discovering the call to ordained ministry and serving in various places and with various projects in Tanzania.

Taking God’s hand means that at times our mission will take us to places where we would never go on our own. Companion Marie Trout who serves as both co-director of Vocation Ministry for the Kansas City Province and co-director of Companions acknowledges how following one’s call seems at times like “mission impossible.” But she writes, “Many times mission has been most clear in the struggle.”

Helping those who struggle is the focus of Companion Judy Kotecki-Martin’s ministry as a therapist. Judy reflects, “Mission is about perspective on how we live each moment of our life.” She offers helpful insights on discerning one’s mission and practical advice on keeping one’s mission alive and well.

As a hospital chaplain, Bill Hubmann has spent many years of his priestly ministry with those who are not well, with those who are sick and dying. Bill reflects how mission is not only a matter of taking hold of the hand of God, but a matter of feet: “Where else could my feet be but on the road that leads to life no matter the struggles and difficulties along the way.”

Companion Ann Tucker has encountered more than a few struggles and obstacles on her journey of faith but these have taken her deeper into the paschal mystery in her life. As a member of the Precious Blood Mission Team, Ann shares her understanding of this mystery through sharing her stories of how the key precious blood symbols of the covenant, cross, and cup have impacted her life. “It is in telling our own stories and naming where we feel the presence of God in our own lives that people can recognize God’s presence in theirs.”

Finally, a frequent contributor, Adorer of the Blood of Christ Madeleine Kisner, reflects how our mission captures and carries out this new covenant of love in two poems in this issue. As precious blood people of the new covenant, we go forth from the wine cellar into the world by taking hold of the compassionate and creative hand of God who guards and guides us, inspires and encourages us, enlivens and energizes us to live the mission of reconciling all through the blood of Christ and renewing the face of the earth.



# Living our Mission Via Community Organizing

By William Delaney, CPPS

**D**uring the past twenty years we as Missionaries of the Precious Blood have been challenged in our regional, provincial, national and international assemblies to live out our call to Mission, Community and Spirituality. In early 1993 we were sent a document, "Profile of a Missionary" which was a statement adopted by the CPPS vocation and formation personnel at an international gathering in 1992. In this document we were challenged under the title "Mission" as follows:

To be evangelized by the living Word of God present in the people and in the values of the culture to whom we are sent;

- To evangelize in promoting justice;
- In defending human rights and dignity;
- To collaborative ministry with all of the faithful;
- To intercultural and international sensitivity;
- To stand in solidarity with those who suffer: the alienated, the poor, the disenfranchised, victims of oppression, and the marginalized;
- To resist deceit, injustice, and whatever is contrary to God's reign;
- To mobility, flexibility and availability to various situations and cultures.

This part of the profile put in words for me what I had been doing at St. Agnes Parish, Los Angeles, CA in community organizing since 1990.

Community organizing means building power in our communities so that we can have a voice in issues that affect us. It means helping

people know one another's stories and then together decide what the community wants to achieve. St. Agnes is composed of Hispanics from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and some South

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American countries, English-speaking from Belize, Louisiana, the Philippines and some native Angelinos and Koreans. Many Spanish-speaking and some English-speaking are undocumented. The Korean community has many highly educated leaders and works with a Korean Jesuit who also lives with us. In this article, I will tell the story of my working with the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking communities. I will do that by relating a number of stories that illustrate how community organizing really empowers local communities.

### **Institutional Influence**

**I**n my ministry of community organizing, I have found great help in being part of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). The Industrial Areas Foundation is the oldest institution for community organizing in the United States. Founded by Saul Alinsky in 1940 in Chicago, its mission is to train people to organize themselves and their institutions, to take responsibility for solving the problems in their own communities and to begin or renew the interest of residents in public life.

Saul Alinsky had an intuition that people could be more easily organized as members of churches or synagogues because their members positively regarded these institutions. The institution is asked to make a commitment of indicating people with leadership talent who will then be trained by the IAF organizers. Additionally, the institution is asked to make a yearly pledge of monetary support. Both of these dimensions are important. New leaders are constantly being formed. The parish, by paying yearly dues, is using some of its material resources for social justice and to improve the local or regional area.

An individual parish or group within a parish cannot bring about social change by itself. By being connected to many other institutions, the local church has much more clout or influence. The professional organizers of the IAF constantly work with local leaders, including the pastor or the clergy-person-designate to formulate plans of action and after a particular meeting or action to evaluate what just happened.

As I indicated above, community organizing means building power in the local community. One of the maxims of the IAF is that there are

two sources of power, organized money and organized people. Surprisingly enough, organized people can successfully confront organized money. A very vivid example of that occurred at St. Agnes in the early to mid '90s.

### **Power of the People**

**A**t that time St. Agnes was part of a local IAF organization known as the Southern California Organizing Committee, SCOC. We had 30 churches, Catholic and Protestant, in south-central Los Angeles and Compton, CA. Right across the street from St. Agnes Church and Rectory was a large, vacant lot filled with junk and graffiti. A small market, which had been there, was closed down in the late '80s because it was not competitive. Subsequently the building was razed. Boy's Market, a supermarket chain, bought the land but needed additional land on which three houses, formerly the Jesuit Novitiate, were located. The supermarket chain wanted the City of Los Angeles to purchase the houses and move them so they had sufficient space to build a competitive supermarket for the area. The supermarket was desperately needed. Many local residents did not drive and had to go over two miles to the closest supermarket.

We had many meetings over several months with the head of the Real Estate Department of the supermarket chain. He kept telling us that nothing could be done. After several such meetings our organizer said that we needed to meet with the CEO of the supermarket. We were told that he was a venture capitalist and did not meet with neighborhood groups. Our organizer told us that we needed to confront him. At this time his corporate office was located in Claremont, CA, thirty miles east of St. Agnes. On a Friday morning we rented a bus and took about fifty people to his corporate office. Arriving around 11:30 AM, we went to his office in a multi-storied building, but no one answered the door.

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Right across the street from the office was a mini mall with small open-air restaurants. This venture capitalist had just paid five million dollars to purchase a house that had formerly been owned by a famous actor. This had been noted in all of the print media of Los Angeles. We had prepared flyers that said this venture capitalist CEO could spend five million dollars for his own benefit but would not do anything to help a poor, immigrant community in south central Los Angeles to have

a desperately needed supermarket. As people were coming to these outdoor restaurants for lunch, we distributed the flyers for about 15 minutes and then left to return to St. Agnes.

On the following Monday morning the

parish secretary told me that I had a phone call. When I answered the phone it was the venture capitalist CEO. He was shouting in the phone about how crass we had been on the previous Friday in distributing those flyers. His biggest complaint was, "Last Friday was my birthday!" I responded that we just wanted to have a meeting with him to discuss having a supermarket across the street from the Church. We went back and forth for about twenty minutes and then he hung up.

Subsequently he called the newly elected mayor of Los Angeles, Richard Riordan, to complain about our actions. Prior to the mayoral election, Richard Riordan, another venture capitalist, had come to St. Agnes to participate in a candidate's forum. In front of a packed church he announced that he would work with us to get a supermarket across the street from the church. Mayor Riordan told the venture capitalist CEO, "They just want to meet with you. Why don't you meet in my office?"

Two weeks later five of our leaders, including our organizer, and myself met with the venture capitalist CEO in the mayor's office in the Los Angeles City Hall. This was the beginning of a four-year relationship that ended with the building of the supermarket, now called Ralph's. The supermarket has positively transformed the whole area. In short, organized people confronted and challenged organized money. Together organized people and organized money upgraded the local community.

This story also validates another IAF maxim that power is never freely shared. Organized people must be willing to confront organized money to show how it is in the interest of organized money to work with organized people. The story above showed how a rich, venture capitalist CEO didn't like being put in a negative light by organized people. In the following years while construction was going on, if we ran into a hesitation about meeting with supermarket officials, all we had to say was, "We can always celebrate the CEO's birthday again!" Immediately the logjam would be lifted and the meeting held.

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## Confronting Immigration Issues

**A**t the time of this strategy and campaign to build a supermarket, many of our leaders were not citizens. Some had green cards but many were simply undocumented. In our organizing efforts, SCOC invited everyone who wanted to better our community to participate. Many undocumented people were leaders and key people in transforming our local community.

In the mid 1990s the IAF decided to launch a national campaign for citizenship for thousands of legal residents who were unable to get their citizenship because of the ineptitude of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, INS. In most instances the INS did not have sufficient workers, especially in large, metropolitan centers, to interview

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and test applicants who were legal residents. In 1994 St. Agnes SCOC enthusiastically joined in this campaign called, "Active Citizenship Campaign." The idea was to have thousands of legal residents, most of who had participated in the amnesty program in the mid 1980s, complete their application for citizenship, have an interview and be tested by the INS. If they passed the test, which we helped them prepare for, they could be naturalized and could vote in the 1996 presidential election.

In early 1994 many IAF churches had a big, public meeting in East Los Angeles with the Director of the INS in Los Angeles. He was asked directly in front of over 1,000 people, many of whom were legal residents caught in the INS roadblock, "Will you hire twenty-five more agents in the next three months to interview and test applicants for citizenship?" His response was "I'll try." One of our priest leaders responded, "For over 30 years I've celebrated many weddings. When I ask the groom or bride, 'Will you take this person for your lawful wife or husband? Will you be true to her/him in good times and bad ... until death do you part?' The groom or bride always responds, 'Yes or I do.' If the groom or bride responds, 'I'll try,' the wedding is cancelled. Maybe you want to say "No" to our question. The INS Director jumped to his feet and wrote on the big chart on the stage, YES. The auditorium erupted in applause. We all left there with much hope.

Once again organized people had confronted organized money, in this case the U.S. government, and elicited a response, which benefited the marginalized. However, in reality, the INS continued to drag its feet and not hire additional personnel to interview and test applicants for citizenship.

## The Reality of Relationship

One of the key components in IAF organizing is forming a relational community. Leaders know one another's stories and call upon these stories to advance our agenda. For many years the IAF has organized faith-based communities in Texas. The oldest IAF organization in Texas is in San Antonio, Community Organized in Public Service, COPS. In the early '80's COPS was very instrumental in having Henry Cisneros elected as Mayor of San Antonio. In subsequent years the IAF maintained a relationship with him.

In the first Clinton administration, 1992-1996, Henry Cisneros was appointed Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, HUD. When the INS continued to drag its feet in Los Angeles in 1994-1995, we contacted HUD Secretary, Henry Cisneros and told him of our problem ending with the message, "if thousands of legal residents are naturalized before the 1996 elections they will probably vote for President Clinton and he will carry California and win the election. If they are not naturalized, they won't be able to vote and possibly President Clinton won't carry California and lose the presidential election."

Secretary Cisneros arranged for our key leaders to meet with Vice President Al Gore when he came to California in late 1995. We related our frustrations to him and within two months the INS had hired more agents to interview and test applicants for citizenship in Los Angeles county. From 1994-1996 in Los Angeles County the IAF helped 35,000 legal residents get their citizenship. In St. Agnes alone we helped over 2,000 people receive their citizenship.

This whole process was very exciting and energizing. We invited people to come on Saturday mornings to our *Salon de Formación*, or formation room. About twenty of our volunteers would help people fill out the application for citizenship, and then we gave them a list of key

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questions, which would be asked during the citizenship interview. If they didn't speak and understand Basic English, we had English classes taught two nights a week by a Holy Cross Sister, who was a retired teacher and who was bi-lingual. St. Agnes received a grant from the Mother Brunner Fund of the Dayton CPPS Sisters' for two years to fund the salary of the Holy Cross Sister. In the week or two before the interview and test, our leaders would help people cram for the big day. If people did not pass the initial interview and test they could re-apply.

Well over 90% passed. When people returned to our community after passing the test the looks on their faces were ecstatic!

### **Immigration Reform**

All of this occurred because of community organizing. People who had arrived in Los Angeles and begun coming to St. Agnes as marginalized, undocumented immigrants are now naturalized citizens. They have better jobs, many own their own homes, and many of their children are college graduates.

In the meantime more immigrants have arrived and are without papers. The IAF organization in Los Angeles has been reorganized and is now called One LA-IAF, and St. Agnes continues to be an integral

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part of the organization. In the process of re-organization, we now include faith-based communities but also unions, public schools and small not for profit organizations. We currently have over 110 institutions participating in One LA-IAF throughout Los Angeles County. One of our goals right now is to work for a just, comprehensive immigration reform, which will allow undocumented persons and their families to come out of the shadows and live in dignity.

Before the current debate for immigration reform began, One LA-IAF entered into a relationship with the Mexican Consulate in Los Angeles. We suggested that officials of the Mexican Consulate come to churches that were part of One LA-IAF and issued identification cards to undocumented people from Mexico. If people have identification cards they can open bank accounts, obtain civil marriage licenses and many other things. The Consul General in Los Angeles agreed with this idea. He created what is called: *Consulado Movil*, the moving consulate. This mobile unit began visiting One L.A. Churches last spring. Applicants would present their birth certificate from Mexico, an envelope on which was written their current name and address and a nominal fee.

A year ago I was working at a Diocesan parish in southeast Los Angeles, St. Aloysius Gonzaga. The mobile unit visited St. Aloysius on a Saturday morning in May 2005. Five hundred identification cards were issued to undocumented Mexicans from there and the neighboring parish, Presentation of Mary. Later that month the mobile unit visited St. Agnes and over four hundred identification cards were issued to the undocumented from St. Agnes and its neighbor, St. Vincent.

I returned to St. Agnes in August 2005 to once again live and work in community. My main focus here right now is on community organizing with One LA-IAF. We are currently working to have an improved relationship with the Los Angeles Police Department and to maintain affordable housing. We are located adjacent to the University of Southern California. Families of students as well as developers are buying many units to convert to student housing. By continuing to organize we hope to continue to be a voice for the marginalized that live in our parish. The challenge is new but our history gives us hope.

In summary, community organizing is a vehicle for helping us to work with and for the alienated, the poor, the disenfranchised, victims of oppression and the marginalized.



### **For Reflection**

- In the community where I live and/or work, who are the power people? What kind of relationship do my Christian brothers & sisters have to the power people?
- Do I know the stories of the marginalized people in my community? What are their fears, hopes, and dreams?
- What are the justice areas that need to be addressed in my local community? Who are the others that would identify these same areas? How can we unite to begin addressing these issues?



*Bill Delaney, an original member of the Kansas City Province, transferred to the Pacific Province in late 1965. He ministered in that province until its suppression in June 2005, at which time he rejoined the Kansas City Province. Bill was in high school ministry until 1977. In that year he began working in parochial ministry at St. Anthony's, Manteca, Ca, in the central valley of California. In 1980 he went to Cuernavaca, Mexico to take part in an immersion program in Spanish. Upon returning to St. Anthony's he initiated a Hispanic Ministry program. In 1990 he was assigned as Pastor at St. Agnes, Los Angeles, Ca. He continued in that position until summer of 2001. From 2001-2005 he worked in an archdiocesan parish, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, in southeast Los Angeles, doing community organizing. Feeling the call to live and work in community once again, Bill returned to St. Agnes in August 2005, where he works as a Senior Priest specializing in community organizing.*



# The Hands of the Poor

By Sister Jacinta Langlois, ASC

I look down to see  
a handsome young man, with hands gnarled and sore,  
another with rough and grease-streaked hands.

An older man with crippled hands,  
he cannot write...but only makes a few "X" marks  
to show me that he wanted to do what I asked,  
"Please sign your name here."

A man who wanted to shake hands with me—  
rough and sore and blistered edges,  
what does this man do all day?  
Does he work with tools that cut and sear?  
Does he lie on the streets and the doorsteps  
where wind and rain deform his hands?

A young Korean man marks a Korean symbol,  
hands swollen and red, and "left outside too long."

What were your hands like, Jesus,  
when they nailed you to the cross?  
Split and cracked and broken  
were you a "sign and symbol" to those who came to dine tonight?

Were You 'the sign' of not what I see  
but what is under the skin and in the heart of the gnarled man?

Jesus, bless the hands of the poor.  
Fill them with food and healing.  
What is "deep inside" is Your Presence  
made new to me.



*Sister Jacinta Langlois is an Adorer of the Blood of Christ who lives at the Wichita Center. This reflection was inspired when she "began to notice the condition of many of the men's hands as they checked in" at the Lord's Diner where she volunteered at the front desk on several winter nights. The Lord's Diner serves the homeless in downtown Wichita.*



# Mission in Tanzania: Standing Shoulder-to-Shoulder

By Timothy Coday, CPPS

**B**EGA KWA BEGA means “shoulder to shoulder” in Swahili. A classmate used this expression in her evaluation of me. She said this expression comes from the experience of women who go to the well for water. They go two-by-two to help each other lift the bucket of water on their heads, making it easier. “Bega kwa Bega,” she said to me. “You have walked to the well with many people.”

I entered the community in August 1972. After six years of formation I made final profession in 1978 becoming a Brother in the Society of the Precious Blood. Through formation and after profession I was stationed at Precious Blood Seminary in Liberty, Missouri. I had a variety of tasks from staff member for student formation to kitchen and car repair.

In 1983 the Kansas City Province decided to close Precious Blood Seminary. I was shocked because this was the place I called home for 11 years. Through spiritual direction I heard Jesus calling me to follow him. In this period of reflection I recalled in fourth grade I had been interested in the White Fathers—the Missionaries of Africa. I began looking at working in the missions. Since the Kansas City Province had no foreign missions I wrote to those provinces in the congregation that did. I ended up in Tanzania working with the Italian Province who started the mission in Tanzania.

Many different opinions surfaced about my going to Tanzania and to be honest, none were favorable. After language studies for Swahili, I was placed in charge of the formation program in Itigi. I was quite nervous and felt unprepared.

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There were two groups. One group was students finishing high school and the other finishing grade school. I was told not to worry because the high school students knew some English. Without me knowing it a Sister had gone over and told the students that if she caught them speaking to me in English she would see that they got kicked out. I did learn Swahili and out of those two groups, four are ordained priests for the Tanzanian Vicariate.

From Itigi I was transferred to the mission house in Dar es Salaam. This is the house where guests coming and going in and out of the country are welcomed. There is also an office to oversee the importation of goods needed to run the CPPS missions. We were in the process of building a hospital. The economic situation at the time was very poor. We were importing cement, other constructional supplies, and even diesel.

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It was at this time I heard Jesus calling again for me to follow him. This time it was to return to school to seek ordination to the priesthood. I entered Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wisconsin. They had a program for second career vocations. I worked on my under graduate degree at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee and developed programs to help the students of both the School of Theology and the university look at stereotypes and social injustices in the Milwaukee area.

### **Pastor, Administrator, and Ambulance Driver**

I was ordained in May 1994 and in August of that same year I was made pastor of Chibumagwa parish. I was the only priest for a parish consisting of 18 villages, though I did have the help of a seminarian. In October of that year I was made administrator of a maternity clinic where there was an average of 70-80 births a month, in addition to my parish responsibilities.

The first day I took over as administrator, I finished the 6:30 AM Mass and was handed a note. They needed the car at the maternity clinic. A pregnant woman was very sick and we had to get her to the hospital on the mountain. The sick woman was carried in on a stretcher and placed on the middle seat of the land rover with an IV bottle pinned to the ceiling. As I drove, a nurse was in the back reaching over the seat to hold the woman on the seat. The doctor stood over her running a

pump with his foot for suction to keep the patient's air passage clear, while also keeping an eye on her vital signs.

The road to the mountain hospital is very rocky and very steep. At the hospital, as I helped remove the woman from the land rover and get her on a steel cart to take her to surgery, she regained consciousness. I was the first person she saw. Seeing a white face frightened her and she tried to get away. She made it to surgery, however, and mother and child were both okay.

Other times we were not so lucky. One night at 2:00 AM I went with a nurse to one of the other villages to pick up a pregnant woman. On the way to the hospital half way up the mountain she died. We returned to the village and took the deceased back home to explain to the parents they lost their child and grandchild.

In our big parishes we use catechists to keep the faith community going. There was a village 52 kilometers from the parish house. The people had been working over a year to cut a road through the bush so they could get health care and Mass, but they were starting to lose hope. The catechist came and explained the situation to me. He asked if it would be possible for me to come to show the people that if they finish the road I would come.

On the way to the village, we had a flat tire. After changing the tire we continued and we parked the car at a house near where the road ended. We walked the rest of the way—about six kilometers. I was the first white person in this part since 1956. Many were afraid of me. On the way back we had another flat. We had patches and glue but we had no pump. We took the tube out and filled the tire with grass. We really packed it in and remounted the tire. It worked for a while but the weight

*I was the first white person in this part since 1956.*

*Many were afraid of me.*

of the truck crushed the grass. I slept in the bush that night. The people thought after experiencing so many difficulties I would never come back.

But we organized the people in the village. With my truck and with axes and machetes we started cutting the trees closest to the parish house. The people from the village who wanted help with health care worked from their end and we finished the road. The ASC sisters provide the health care. They go twice a month. The first time I heard confessions I had an 80-year old woman who said she had not been to confession since she was baptized. The community continued to grow and today they have built a primary school.

## Taste and See

**T**he Scriptures have come alive for me. When I was in Manyoni as pastor the gospel of the day was Jesus sending his disciples out and telling them to take nothing with them and to eat what was put in front of them.

A young man had asked me to help move his mother and two younger sisters. His mother was the first wife of a man who owned many cattle. He was killed and all the cattle stolen. The cattle thieves also killed the mother and sister of the second wife. The second wife was going to live with her brother and the young man who approached me did not want his mother living way out in the bush all by herself.

So we went and the house was truly out in the bush. The closest neighbor was six kilometers away. The thieves literally hunted down the man. I was shown where he had tried to dig through the walls to get out and where he had hid under some lumber and was dragged out and killed.

After loading my truck with the belongings and giving sympathy to the second wife I was invited to a meal. I recognized the *ugali*, which is cooked, thick corn flour. But I had no idea what the other pot was. Then I remembered the gospel—eat what they place in front of you. I waited until someone else started then proceeded to each what turned out to be boiled chicken. Though it did not look appetizing because feet and head were floating on top, it was very good.

After the meal they brought in another pot. It looked like some one had vomited in it. I was invited to eat but didn't know if I should or not. I remembered again the gospel so I asked how you eat this dish. I

*The Scriptures have come alive for me.*

figured if they would eat it it cannot be that bad. One other person took two fingers and dipped in and put it in his mouth then spit something out on the ground. I was invited again to taste this dish and was really surprised. It was unfiltered honey. It still had part of the comb and bees in it. You put it in your mouth and then spit out the wax. I noticed they were looking at what I was spitting out and they started to laugh. One told me I was eating the bees. We left this sad place with a laugh.

## Cross-Cultural Experiences

**W**hile I was in Manyoni I got a letter from Cardinal Stritch University. They wanted to have an experience of life in Africa. They contacted a place in Kenya but they wanted too much money. I invited them to come. After a tour of Dar es Salaam to show them the haves and have nots so they could see the difference between city and rural life, we went up to Bagamoyo, the original port of East Africa. I took them there to talk about the slave trade and the

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*The university students get a look at the fact that joy  
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history of Tanzania. Bagamoyo is where the slaves were marched to and sold and put on ships for shipment to Zanzibar. It is also where the first missionaries arrived on the main land in the 1860s.

From here we traveled to Manyoni that is in the center of the country. Here for ten days the university students live as Tanzanians. They have to gather fire wood, water, and cook on an open fire. They bathe from a bucket. If they want warm water they have to boil water and mix it in the bucket.

I have work projects set up so they can work with the Tanzanians. I stress that it is a working together and not one group watching the other. I try to get projects that do not require a lot of verbal commands because language is a problem. Every night I have speakers come in to talk about Tanzanian life from different points of view. I have two young men, then two young women, a couple, two older men and two older women. I want them to be aware of what was and what is. Also to see the differences in salaried jobs and people who get their income from the land.

This has been a very good program. The Tanzanians become aware of their giftedness and stereotypes they have picked up about non-blacks and non-Africans. The university students get a look at the fact that joy is not in material things and stereotypes they have formed. They come every other year. This year will be the sixth group.

### **The Water Project**

**I**n 2000 I was pastor of Kintinku Parish. The Episcopal conference of Tanzania decided to have a cross for each diocese. The cross was to start at the see city of the diocese and during the year travel to each parish of the diocese returning to the see city for a grand celebration at the end of the year.

In Kintinku, we set the goal to visit each house of each Catholic family in the parish, or at least as many as we could. We had one day in each of the 15 villages in the parish. We sang and danced and prayed at almost all the families' houses. We even took off our shoes and rolled up our pants to cross a river to get to some of the houses.

When I moved into Kintinku, people asked me how I could live there. Kintinku has had a water problem for 22 years during the dry season that is eight months long. The people would have to travel as

much as 15 kilometers to get water. I told them that each morning I got two drops of water to use to wash up—one drop for each eye.

When I investigated about the water problem, I discovered that there were two wells drilled by the Germans when they built the railway in the 1890s. I approached the city council asking if I could take part in their meetings as a citizen of the town—one among many. I wanted to know what they thought were their biggest problems. At first they thought I was coming with lots of money. After they realized I didn't have deep pockets, we began talking seriously about the water problem. I asked if we could help each other and solve the water problem. They only saw the price tag. It would cost money that the village did not have.

But I helped them see how each one in the village could contribute. With their strengths and willingness to work, we could dig the trenches to lay the pipe. So we assigned each family the length of five steps. We recorded the names of each family so we all knew who was not digging. To bring water to two villages we dug trenches 4.5 kilometers in length.

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With the people of the village digging the trenches, I found some funds to drill wells, lay pipe, and install pumps so that everyone had water.

We set up a system to sell the water. At the end of the first year we had enough money in the bank to purchase a second generator. The project is still going and I am at the point of trying to turn it all over to the people.

After my success with the people of Kintinku I was invited to be part of the Water Project run by the Atlantic Province of the CPPS. I was asked to work in villages and help them take ownership of the well and windmill they were given, and help them find the means to pay all maintenance costs. Up to this point all the cost was born by the Water Project. This is my current position along with coordinating the program with Cardinal Stritch University.

### **The Mission Continues**

**W**hatever successes we have here is because of *Bega kwa Bega*—walking with people shoulder to shoulder. I have tried to enter their lives and walk and work with them in the

every day activities of their lives. In this way I have gotten to know them and am able to respond to each in a personal way.

The mission with the people of Tanzania has brought me a whole new understanding of what it means to follow Jesus. Recall the Gospel story when Jesus was walking along the shore and spotted James and John. He said, "Follow me." They got up and followed him leaving their father with the hired hands and their boats. They left all that gave them security to answer the call. They had no idea what was in store for them, but look at what did happen!

I have found this in my own life. When I let go and follow Jesus I receive back so much more.

*The mission with the people of Tanzania has brought me a whole new understanding of what it means to follow Jesus.*

It is not without cost. I left home, all that I knew that gave me security. I lived with Italians and ministered with Tanzanians when I did not know either language. At first there was so much I did not understand and there was no one around to ask. Many times I would sing to myself, "No one can shake my inmost calm while to this rock I am clinging. My rock is Lord of heaven and earth. How can I keep from singing?" Some times I would sing this hundreds of times a day.

If Gaspar were alive today he would be doing the same thing. He saw a need and set out to address it. One must see people as body and soul. One has to minister to both.

This is my mission and in missioning I walk "Bega kwa Bega".



### **For Reflection**

- How do the scriptures speak to you?
- How do you understand the mission of following Jesus?  
Reflect on an experience when you put your "hand to the plow" and did not look back.
- In his mission in Tanzania, Father Tim Coday has worked with Christians and Muslims. He writes, "I have found some Muslims more 'Christian' than the Christians." Do you know a person who is Muslim? How does such knowledge affect your point of view about the world situation?



*Timothy J. Coday CPPS a member of the Kansas City Province is a missionary working in Tanzania. Tim has worked in Parishes, Formation, and community organizing. Currently he is working with the Atlantic Province in their water project to provide a healthy water source for those who do not have such.*



# **On Being Possible: A Mission from God**

**By Marie Trout, Companion**

**M**ission is a word that seems to be in vogue in the popular culture today. In our family room my husband has a large poster from one of his favorite movies, "The Blues Brothers." It shows the two main characters, Jake and Elwood, with the quote, "On a Mission from God!" Their mission is to raise money to pay the taxes for an orphanage so that it will not be closed down. They go about this mission in a rather unconventional manner, but are none-the-less dedicated to the task at hand.

Another popular show from television and now a major motion picture is "Mission Impossible". The main character receives a message at the beginning of the show that states: "Your mission, if you choose to accept it is...." The mission is then clearly spelled out and the rest of the show takes you along on a "mission" adventure.

My life might not make a very interesting TV show or movie, and there has never been a tape with a clear message on it. But a sense of mission has surfaced in various ways in my life and in this reflection I will explore how I have come to understand our "mission from God."

## **Universal Call to Mission**

**W**hen I was in high school our pastor was also our religion teacher. I remember when we had a class on the call of the disciples he told us that we needed to really pay attention to this scripture because it wasn't just a story about a few men being called to be about the mission of God. It was about all of us, ALL OF US, being called to follow the Gospel, to take the Gospel and live the Gospel with those we meet in the course of our everyday life. I

remember this really stuck with me because as a female in the church we were seldom told we had a role.

But being a teenager I did not dwell too long on what these words meant for me. However, important messages have a way of recurring in my life and as a young married woman I was invited to teach religion in our parish. I went to a training session where the presenter quoted Pope Paul VI that reminded us we were all called to be apostles and to live that call in the context of our daily lives. His words also challenged us to foster within ourselves a deep missionary spirit.

Upon hearing that again, I felt a little like the first apostles might have felt. That is, the hesitation and confusion, the uncertainty as to what was I being sent to, wondering if I was prepared to live the message of the Gospel in my world. But for me part of being on a “mission for God” is being on a journey of faith and part of faith for me is not knowing all the details but doing it anyway. It hasn’t always been as simple as “this is my mission if I chose to accept it”. For me it has been more like remembering what the Gospel calls me to in whatever situation I find myself in my life.

*...for me part of being on a “mission for God”  
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I came to understand mission better when I was teaching religion in our parish. My first experience of teaching was with my husband and we were given the Junior High class. Can you tell we were the new young couple in the parish? The topic was Human Sexuality. While this was not like the movie where our mission was clearly spelled out before we undertook it, we did wonder if this was a mission impossible. We talked and decided we just needed to be ourselves, be honest and open with the students and to be open to where this journey would take us.

Any illusions we had about taking God to these young people quickly left the first evening. We discovered God was clearly already present and not only was God present, but God was silly and temperamental and had more energy that we could have ever imagined. God also had deep questions about life and faith and a hunger to make sense of things. Being in relationship with these young people better revealed a sense of mission to me. We brought our sense of the gospel to them and they in turn shared the Gospel as they experienced it to us. I was beginning to understand that mission was being true to the call of the gospel and recognizing God was already present in any situation to

which I was lead, and that because of that relationship my understanding of the gospel would be forever changed and enriched.

### **Precious Blood Missionary Spirit**

**S**everal years later I was invited to explore becoming a Companion with the Society of Precious Blood. Hungering for more spiritual enrichment, the opportunity to gather with other people who were also on a journey of faith was appealing to me. I was then introduced to a new saint, one who I had never even heard of but who would change my life.

Learning about St. Gaspar there were many discussions of mission. I began to have a deeper sense of mission and how as a layperson I was called to have a missionary spirit. I was challenged, though, not to hold on to a static idea of what mission was to be for me. In learning more about Precious Blood spirituality I came to understand from Gaspar's

*Learning about St. Gaspar*

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life and teachings that I needed to pay attention to the “signs of the times.” Mission would continue to mean being true to the Gospel, but where that “mission from God” would take me would change as I was open to the spirit at work within and around me. I became formed in the understanding that the blood of the cross brings all near. But, I was also *transformed* in understanding and living this.

After raising our family and living in a rural Iowa town for 21 years my husband was transferred to the Kansas City area. Upon moving to Kansas City I experienced another “mission impossible” experience. An opportunity came to do ministry for the Kansas City Province in a new way—to work in the Companion Office and also the Vocation Office. Sometimes it is not as easy as just accepting a mission. I dealt with the doubts and hesitation of what could I, as a laywoman, bring to these ministries? In taking it a day at a time and being open to new experiences I experienced mission with people as they explored what God was calling them to, journeying with men who are looking at a call to religious life or to lay men and women who are exploring how precious blood spirituality calls them to live.

Many times mission has been most clear in the struggle. Young men struggle to discern if religious life is where they can best live out what the gospel is calling them to. Laymen and women struggle to see how they incorporate this spirituality into the secular world in which they

live. In experiencing this journey together our sense of mission is enriched and expanded.

### **An Unexpected Mission**

**M**ission opportunities can come at odd and unexpected times in our lives. Opening mail one day, I received a letter from a man who was incarcerated in Oklahoma. He shared his connections with several of our incorporated members and told me Sr. Elizabeth Determan, ASC had suggested he write as he was interested in becoming a Precious Blood Companion.

Being a Companion is about being in relationship with the community and our experience of that had been in the form of groups. This was a new challenge, but one I felt Gaspar would have grasped and been open to. Michael may have been incarcerated, but he felt called to this spirituality. It was time to think outside the box. Gaspar calls us to look at the signs of the times. Michael had existing relationships with precious blood men and women but wanted to learn more and grow in this spirituality. After discussing this new opportunity with the leadership team, Inquiry and Formation began with Michael via the mail.

This man taught me much about Precious Blood spirituality. From his experience of redemption he brought many new insights to me. He integrated this spirituality with his life experiences, some of which had been very hard, but came to feel a deep closeness to St. Gaspar. He was taking this spirituality to many of the men he encountered in prison. He had great hopes of being released and working in a precious blood ministry, but was diagnosed with cancer and quickly succumbed to that disease. He found great comfort from this spirituality and felt at ease with his future.

Michael always wrote, "May we meet often in prayer." I meet him often in prayer, and am reminded that mission is not a private endeavor

*Many times mission has been most clear in the struggle.*

but if it is truly from God and open to the spirit it will not be confined or contained. Michael's formation was not conventional. Michael was on fire with this spirituality and he shared that with many people inside and outside the walls of his existence.

Many times in my life there appeared to be no clear message as to what my mission was to be, but again, I was wrong. I was given the details but not on a tape that would be destroyed upon my listening to it. The details on how I am to live into mission are right where they always are—in the Gospel.

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some of which had been very hard,  
but came to feel a deep closeness to St. Gaspar.*

We are all “on a mission from God” and will probably not receive a plan of how to live this mission. What is important is that we are open to the situations we find ourselves in and recognize God’s presence in all our encounters along the way.



### **For Reflection**

- When have you experienced mission in a surprising way?
- Trace your own faith journey and reflect on those moments when your “mission from God” became clear to you. How did you respond?
- How are you seeking to integrate Precious Blood spirituality into the mission of your life?



*Marie Trout is a Companion of the Kansas City Province. She is a married laywoman and mother involved in the Companion and Vocation Ministries for the Kansas City Province. She was previously active in parish ministry in Iowa and Missouri.*



# Go Forth in My Name

By Madeleine Kisner, ASC

This is your mission—Christ tells His Chosen Twelve—

“I am sending you like sheep among wolves...  
the reign of God is at hand.”

So it behooves you to go forth to all people everywhere,  
Preaching the need for repentance.

**Take nothing with you for—**

**Ministry Welcomes—**

Without reservation, with no pretense,  
No demands of return, no claim to or rejection of  
Those less fortunate.

Only recognition that opens to compassion and acceptance;  
For nothing can happen without welcoming!

**Spread the Good News for—**

**Ministry Guides—**

With word and example, with the  
Spreading of the light of the Lamb on  
Another's life in the search for Gospel values—  
Inviting others to their moment of truth in hope, serenity, and joy;  
For one guides not unless freedom is respected!

**Cure diseases and heal the afflicted for—**

**Ministry Mediates—**

Offering an encounter with Christ,  
Source of life and healing,  
As sign and instrument, evident of Christ in all.  
No profit, plaudits, or plaques for His persevering servants—  
Only the cross, a death to self!

For a mediator invites another  
To participate in the Mystery of the Lamb!



*Sister Madeleine Kisner is a U.S. Adorer of the Blood of Christ. She lives at the Center in Wichita where she taught English for many years at Newman University.*



# MISSION: Hearing God's Call In Your Life

By Judy Kotecki-Martin, Companion

*We are challenged on every hand to work untiringly to achieve excellence in our lifework. Not all [people] are called to specialized or professional jobs; even fewer rise to the heights of genius in the arts and sciences; many are called to be laborers in factories, fields, and streets. But no work is insignificant. All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence. If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will pause to say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.'"* (1)

Martin Luther King, Jr.

**O**n the day we were born, we did not come with a set of life instructions or a map. If we had come with instructions, discerning our life's journey or mission would be so much easier. In this article, I address how we discern our call by first asking, what is mission? Then I look at some practical ways to discern mission in our life and conclude with some final thoughts on mission.

## What is mission?

Webster's dictionary defines **mission** as "a sending out or being sent out with authority to perform a special duty, as by a church,

government, etc.” God has a special mission that only you can fill. We all ponder our mission when we ask questions such as:

“What is my purpose in life?”

“What is my life calling?”

“Why am I here on this earth?”

Mission is not just about our career, our job. It encompasses our vocation and so much more. Mission is about perspective on how we live each moment of our life. St. Gaspar del Bufalo calls us to live our

*Mission is about perspective on how we live  
each moment of our life.*

lives like Jesus who was about spreading His Father’s message of love. Jesus embodies the qualities of love, service, honesty, truth, sacrifice, mercy, justice, hospitality, forgiveness, reconciliation and reaching out to the marginalized. We are called to do the same in our lives. Jesus continually surrendered to His Father’s will even to death on a cross and pouring out His precious blood for others.

Our careers or roles may change radically or in minor ways through the transitions and stages of life as we grow older but our mission is constant, namely, to spread Jesus’ message of love.

## **Practical Ways to Discern Mission**

### *Healthy self-love*

We have to love ourselves before we can truly love others. Each of us is a beloved child of God and all are children of God. If we truly believe that we are God’s children then we will have a healthy love of oneself and others. A healthy self-love involves believing I am a person of self worth because I am human, and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. A person who has unhealthy self-love has to brag about oneself or put others down to make oneself feel good. The person might feel better for a while, but when the insecurities creep in the process starts all over again. If we are going to be messengers of God’s love we have to first love ourselves.

### *Taking care of yourself*

We need to take a holistic approach to health and wellness. In 1976 Dr. William Hettler, M.D. developed a wellness model that includes six dimensions: physical, intellectual (mental), social, emotional, spiritual and occupational. According to Dr. Hettler, we need to develop all six areas of our lives to be a healthy, well-balanced person. Often times we are unbalanced in our lives because we may develop 1 or 2 areas, for

example, physical and occupational, while neglecting the other areas of our lives. Here are some questions to ask in the six areas:

### **1. Physical**

Do I take care of my body by eating nutritiously, exercising regularly and getting adequate sleep?

Do I avoid those things that are destructive to my health, for example, excessive alcohol use, cigarette smoking and illegal drug use?

### **2. Intellectual**

Do I spend time reading books or watching TV programs that stimulate my mind?

Do I develop areas of intellectual interest?

Do I avoid TV programs, movies and books that are harmful to my thoughts and well-being?

### **3. Social**

Do I develop healthy friendships with others?

Do I take time to help others in need or who are less fortunate?

Do I see God in every person I meet?

### **4. Emotional**

Can I express my feelings and emotions to others?

Can I give and receive love from others?

### **5. Spiritual**

Do I take time to develop my spiritual life?

Do I live out my spiritual beliefs in my daily life?

### **6. Occupational**

**(What is my purpose in life, i.e. my "mission"?)**

Do I put forth my best effort in my work each day?

Do I see God using me as an instrument to bring about healing in the lives of others?

### *Spending Quiet Time in Prayer*

Throughout the gospels we hear of how Jesus spent quiet time in prayer and went off to remote places to pray. If Jesus, the Son of God, needed quiet time to discern His Father's will, how much more do we need prayer and quiet time to reflect on God's will in our own lives?

Henri Nouwen, a well-known spiritual author, talks about the importance of prayer in our lives. Nouwen states that when we take

time for silence we may hear the dark voices of jealousy, anger, resentment and desire for revenge, lust, greed, and our pain over losses, abuses and rejections. We don't want to hear these negative voices so we avoid quiet time and return to our entertainment. Nouwen goes on to say that if we discipline ourselves to engage in quiet time we will start to hear the positive, gentler voices of the light which speak of peace, kindness, gentleness, goodness, joy, hope, forgiveness and love. (2)

Albert Schweitzer (1969), Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1953, also talked about listening to the inner voice:

Your soul suffers if you live superficially. People need times in which to concentrate, when they can search their inmost selves. It is tragic that most...have not achieved this feeling of self-awareness. And finally, when they hear the inner voice they do not want to listen anymore. They carry on as before so as not to be constantly reminded of what they have lost. But as for you, resolve to keep a quiet time both in your homes and here within these peaceful walls (of the church) when the bells ring on Sundays. Then your souls can speak to you without being drowned out by the hustle and bustle of everyday life. (3)

One of the things I've realized as a therapist is that **listening** is very hard work! Often times when we listen to another person we want to find a solution to the problem; tell the other person they shouldn't feel that way; or give our opinion. What we need to do is be present and acknowledge the person's feelings. In solitude and prayer we learn to listen to the inner voice of God in our souls. Then we can be better listeners when we are with others, and validate their experiences and feelings.

*In solitude and prayer  
we learn to listen to the inner voice of God  
in our souls.*

Recently I saw a woman at the mental health center who was suffering from depression. After the first session, I had her wait in the reception area while I scheduled her a doctor's appointment. When I returned to give the woman her appointment she introduced me to her son "Joey" who was 6 years of age. Joey remarked, "You have an angel just like me!" I was wearing a necklace with a medal of St. Gabriel the Archangel. Joey had a miraculous medal of Mother Mary hanging from a white string around his neck. I asked where he got the medal, and the mother said from someone at the soup kitchen gave it to him.

I held Joey's medal, and started to go off into a discourse about Mother Mary and the miraculous medal. I suddenly realized that this precious, innocent child had his heart in the right place and it was me

who was off track. I remarked, "She is a beautiful angel and she will protect you!" All Joey wanted was for me to acknowledge his joy that we both shared a connection in wearing "angel" necklaces.

We live in a world of so much advanced technology you'd think we'd be more connected to others and yet we feel more isolated. TV, radio, computers, cell phones, etc. have made our lives easier and more comfortable in many ways. This technology also has a downside. It may be easier to be entertained by TV, radio, computers and video games than to spend time in prayer. We need to spend time in solitude and prayer to stay in touch with our souls, and keep grounded in our life's mission.

A recent study indicated that with all our technological devices (i.e., email, voice mail, cell phones) we lose 2.1 hours a day at work due to interruptions. The study stated that on average we have an interruption every 10 minutes, and if we answer that interruption it takes 23 minutes to get back on task. In the early 1980's the experts approximated that the average person's attention span was 20 minutes. The experts now

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*In silence God's love can penetrate deep into our heart and soul.*

say the average person's attention span is 7 minutes which correlates with TV programming that have commercials approximately every 7 minutes.

When we take time for prayer, quiet and solitude we are confronted with **existential loneliness**. Feelings of emptiness and loneliness can be very unsettling, and we may busy our lives so we don't have to face them. Existential loneliness may be God's inner compass in guiding us back to Him and giving us direction in our lives. In the words of Ronald Rolheiser:

Perhaps the old myths and legends capture it best when they say that, before being born, each soul is kissed by God and then goes through life always, in some dark way, remembering that kiss and measuring everything it experiences in relation to that original sweetness. To be in touch with your heart is to be in touch with this primordial kiss, with both its preciousness and its meaning. (4)

Existential loneliness makes us realize that only God can truly satisfy all of our emotional needs.

Prayer helps us to become more **mindful**, focused and grounded in what our life's call is about. In silence God's love can penetrate deep into our heart and soul.

Developing our personal prayer life is so important because it greatly enhances our communal prayer life (i.e., attending mass or Sunday service). Physical hunger and spiritual hunger are similar. Realistically we know that a person cannot live on one meal a week. Likewise, attending mass or a Sunday service once a week is not going to fill all our spiritual needs. We need to take time daily to do spiritual reading (for example the Bible or inspirational book) and reflect on those readings.

The heart of our Catholic faith lies in the Eucharist. Meditate on the meaning of receiving bread and wine at communion. When we receive the bread we are a part of God's creation and connected with all humanity. When we drink from the cup of wine, can we say yes to the painful struggles of life and pour out our lives for others just as Jesus did for us?

### **Final Thoughts on Mission**

God has sprinkled his gifts on all of us. Find your passion and God will work through you to bring about His kingdom.

God is with us in the daily routine of our lives. We need to be more mindful of how we live each moment of our lives. As Joan Chittister, OSB (2004) says:

Life is not made up of crises; life is made up of little things we love to ignore in order to get on to the exciting things in life. But God is in the details. God is in what it takes in us to be faithful to them. God is in the routines that make us what we are. The way we do the little things in life is the mark of the bigness of our souls. (5)

Interruptions are part of God's work. In fact they may be our real life's work. The next time you are interrupted don't worry about falling behind in your daily tasks, for God has you where he wants you.

A team approach is vital to living out your mission. When doing God's work you don't have to go it alone. Jesus called twelve apostles plus many other men and women to be his disciples and spread His message of love. The spiritual support of family and friends is essential to living out your mission because when life's struggles challenge your faith others are there to strengthen you. Likewise, when others face roadblocks in their life or doubts in their faith, your unwavering faith will carry them through the difficult times.

In today's fast paced world many of us suffer from "hurry sickness." We want tasks and activities completed immediately with positive results. We may have to realize that *our time* is not *God's time*. God may use us to plant the seeds of His work, but we may not see the harvest of the full crop in our life. God gives us little miracles and glimpses of light occasionally to lead us on the right path. In the wise words of Albert Schweitzer:

Not one of us knows what effect his life produces, and what he gives to others; that is hidden from us and must remain so, though we are often allowed to see some little fraction of it, so that we may not lose courage. (6)

In January of this year I attended our church's annual women's retreat. I walked into the social hall that had several tables and randomly sat at a table. A laminated picture of Mother Teresa, my heroine, was lying in the center of the table and I had this intuitive feeling that God had me where he wanted me. (When God has a mission for you it's not uncommon to experience His presence taking over you!) A young woman named "Jamie" along with her mother-in-law and sister-in-law also sat at the table.

Throughout the day our paths kept crossing each other. While eating lunch together, I asked Jamie about her life. Jamie, 28 years of age, said she had been married for 6 months and her husband "Eric," 32 years of age, who was a pilot died in a plane crash last year. Jamie had been attending medical school to become a pediatrician. She was

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getting ready to do her residency and decided to take the year off. My heart ached for this woman of strong spiritual faith who was experiencing such deep grief and sorrow over the loss of her spouse and soul mate. At the end of the retreat I asked Jamie if she liked to read and she said yes, so I recommended a book on grief and loss. She stated that she had been looking for some books on grief and was very appreciative for the suggestion.

Later I ran into Jamie again in the parking lot and remarked, "I'll be praying for you. You will be a great doctor!" She hesitatingly said, "I don't know." I replied, "God will heal you, and you will be a 'healer' for others." I can't help but believe that the "Divine Physician" will heal Jamie and she in turn will be an instrument of healing for others.

God has created the unique person that you are, in the time and place God wants you, to carry out His mission of love. You are a vital part of the circle of life and only you can carry out the mission that God has entrusted to you.



#### Notes

1. Michael Lynberg, *The Path With Heart* (Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, 1989), p. 20.
2. Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Can You Drink The Cup?* (Ave Maria Press, Inc., Notre Dame, IN, 1996), p. 95.
3. Albert Schweitzer, *Reverence For Life* (Harper & Row, New York, 1969), pp. 80-81.
4. Ronald Rolheiser, *The Restless Heart* (Doubleday, New York, 2004), p.54.
5. Joan Chittister, *Called To Question* (Sheed and Ward, Oxford, 2004), pp.201-202.
6. Michael Lynberg, *The Path With Heart* (Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, 1989), p. 64.



### For Reflection

- How do you define "mission"?
- How do you discern mission in your life? Were there any ideas in the article that were helpful in identifying and living mission in your life?
- Dr. Hettler's wellness model emphasizes 6 sides of the whole person. Which areas are your strengths? Are there weak areas you need to develop more fully?



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# Where Are Your Feet?

By William Hubmann, CPPS

**O**n the bulletin board next to the desk of the manager of housekeeping at St. Vincent's Hospital in Indianapolis is a post-it with the question, "Where are your feet?" written on it.

These words were taken from a sermon I preached some four years ago. I had been ruminating about the issues of vision and direction in my own life, in the community and in the Church. Are our feet firmly planted on the road that leads to life? Are our hands on the plow with our eyes fixed forward and focused, not distracted and forever turning back? What in the world are we doing and why are we doing it? Are our feet planted on the road that leads to life?

As a grade school boy over forty years ago I served daily Mass for three years at a convent and nursing home run by Italian sisters, the Daughters of Charity of Saint Joan Antida. Some twenty sisters cared for eighty older women in their declining years. Many of them had no family to visit them, some were wheelchair-bound, others bedridden. Some were blind and several were unable to feed themselves.

The elder women who were able cared for the others and the Sisters cared for them all as if they were their own family members. They cared for those in need with a passionate love. They were filled with compassion for those in need of their care. Their feet were firmly planted on the road that leads to life.

One of the Sisters, Maria Bernarda, came from Rome. Her mother was a famous dressmaker near the church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin. By day she made expensive wedding dresses for the rich and famous; by night she invited in the mothers of the poor that they could make the same lace and beaded dresses for their own daughters. Sister Maria



Bernarda was not well educated like her fellow sisters. She could not speak English well. She was somewhat embarrassed that she couldn't be a nurse or a teacher. She cared for the altars and did laundry.

She secretly sewed beautiful lace linens for the Vatican. Sr. Maria Bernarda was a loving mother to all the sisters and a humble simple caregiver to all. She was energized at the table of the Lord whom she constantly served in others. Her feet were firmly fixed on the road that leads to life.

It was Sr. Maria Bernarda who would say every day for the years that I served Mass, "Billy, gonna pray for you become a priest." And every day for the thirteen years I was in seminary she made sure that all the sisters and the ladies prayed for me. Where else could my feet be but on the road that leads to life no matter the struggles and difficulties along the way. I had the constant prayerful support of a powerful community of faith.

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### **Ministry with the Sick**

**T**he love and compassion, the witness of this little, faith-filled, Italian community challenged me to look at ministry to the sick and suffering. From the earliest days of my priesthood I wanted to be a hospital chaplain. I felt called to the ministry of healing the sick, comforting the dying, accompanying those who journey through pain and suffering. Somehow I was always able to see beyond the present sorrow to the joy that was yet to be.

I have spent almost half of my twenty-seven years in ministry as a hospital chaplain. Early on in chaplaincy I was challenged to deal with all of the issues surrounding the care of AIDS patients. Someone needed to be the "go to guy" for the hospital. Bill always seemed to be the one people turned to when a particularly difficult issue arose. Bill was the one to turn to with tragic cases in Emergency. Bill was the one to turn to when it came to the support of families who had experienced a suicide. Bill was the one to turn to with the issues surrounding the return to northern Wisconsin of the young men dying of AIDS. "He'll be good at it," they would say.

"Adam" was a twenty-five year old man who had been working in San Francisco for six years. He came home to die. He had hoped to be welcomed. He hoped for the healing of old wounds. He hoped for

understanding. He hoped for peace. He got rejection and abandonment from his family. His mother said, "On one day I find out he's gay, has AIDS and is dying. It's more than a mother can take." She left and never came back. His father said, "I once had two sons. I'll only say now I have one." His brother said, "How could you do this to us?" His pastor said, "No need for me to come, let the chaplain deal with it."

"Adam" was undergoing experimental treatment through the NIH at Bethesda, MD. His lungs had filled with pneumocystis carinii bacteria and fluid, every square inch of his body was purpled with caposi sarcoma lesions. He was on a ventilator, unable to breathe on his own any longer. The NIH concurred that there was nothing else that could be done, nothing but to keep him comfortable and let him go. He requested then that the ventilator be removed. Morphine was administered to calm his breathing.

I sat with him and held his hand in his last hour of struggle. Even though the world seemed to have abandoned him, God would never abandon him I assured him. I sat with him, prayed with him, and comforted him, holding his hand until he drifted off into the arms of death. He was finally at peace. The memory is etched on my soul.

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For several years I was called on to talk to doctors and nurses and all healthcare professionals, pastors and families on the compassionate care of HIV/AIDS patients. I traveled to hospitals, nursing homes, schools and churches to challenge them to compassionate care and not condemnation and rejection and abandonment. It was an exhaustive task but at the heart and core of all I believed in.

## **The Road to Life**

**T**hrough the years of hospital ministry I have journeyed with thousands of people of faith and hope and light, people who have found healing from disease, healing in forgiveness, and even healing in death. The many gifts of strength and courage, the many stories of healing I received I passed on to help and heal and comfort others in need. I was called to care for others and all along the way others cared for me.

My feet are firmly planted on the road that leads to life. They have taken me through the dark valleys, and arid deserts. They have taken me over high mountains and across vast plains. They have taken me

*My feet are firmly planted on the road that leads to life.*

through lush forests and fragrant gardens. Even in my darkest hours when I have felt that I could not go on God has been with me to give me life. My feet are planted firmly on the road that leads to him. Where are your feet?



### **For Reflection**

- When did I first hear the call to follow the Lord in ministry? How has that call been renewed, changed, deepened?
- Who continues to call me, support me, and nourish me in my call?
- Name one person “who has their feet firmly planted on the road that leads to life”?
- Where am I on that “road”?



***Bill Hubmann** entered Del Bufalo Seminary forty years ago in August of 1966. Was incorporated as a member of the Society in January of 1978. Ordained a priest in June of 1979, Bill served in parishes in North Dakota, Missouri and Wisconsin. He was pastor in the Hill Country of Texas and at St. James in Kansas City, Missouri. For thirteen years, Bill served as chaplain in hospitals in the Marshfield, Wisconsin, Indianapolis and the Chicago area. In his ministry to the dying Bill has been seen as a gentle, quiet, compassionate caregiver and friend. Bill has special talents in music, art, storytelling, preaching and bread making.*



# **Telling the Story: Reflections from the Precious Blood Parish Mission Band**

**By Ann Tucker, Companion**

**M**y eight-year-old grandson made an observation of Fr. Joe Miller, C.P.P.S, pastor of St. James Church in Liberty, Missouri, at Mass one day. He said, “Have you ever noticed how Fr. Joe always smiles when he is leading Mass and how he taps his foot to the music? He really wants to be there. You know, I think up there by the altar is his ‘happy spot.’”

Reflecting on what I wanted to write about my involvement with Precious Blood Parish Missions, Gabe’s words about Fr. Joe’s “happy spot” kept ringing in my ears. When we answer the call to the real mission in our lives, we find our happy spot. The road to and through our mission may not always be smooth and easy, but knowing that a loving, caring Lord is with us through it all—good and bad—helps us to keep forging ahead.

Three years ago, I was asked to be a member of the Precious Blood Parish Missions core team. Initially, I thought I was too busy and did not have the time. On second thought, I felt unqualified for the task, but agreed to put the thought in prayer and think about it. As I thought and prayed about it, there was a nagging feeling that I should do this but there were also some doubts in my mind. After talking it over with some Companions and Members and receiving encouragement from them, I decided to go to the 1st planning meeting in Chicago.

*The concept of a priest, a sister and a layperson presenting a mission together to spread the Precious Blood Spirituality as we recognize it in our own particular life experiences was exciting to me.*

The concept of a priest, a sister and a layperson presenting a mission together to spread the Precious Blood Spirituality as we recognize it in our own particular life experiences was exciting to me. We had been talking about Precious Blood Communities doing some collaborative work in our provincial assemblies, in companion meeting and in combined meetings with the sisters for a long time and through this ministry, it could become a reality.

We brainstormed that whole weekend about what a Precious Blood Parish Mission would look like and what we would name it. First we decided what elements of Precious Blood Spirituality we would focus on in a four-day mission by spending some time identifying and sharing our own stories and spirituality. We agreed to focus on covenant, cross, reconciliation and cup.

Next came the chore to name the mission. Many, many titles were called out and many were thrown out until our weary minds had to take a night's rest. The next morning at Mass, the title, *Proclaiming Abundant Love*, came into Precious Blood Sister Donna Liette's mind. We all agreed that would be the perfect title. I caught the plane back home with butterflies in my stomach just thinking about what a mission would be like where we share God's abundant love with people and to help them realize that awesome love in their own lives.

### **One of 'A Thousand Tongues'**

**W**ith butterflies still fluttering in my stomach, I wondered if I was being called to be a mission preacher; to be one of the thousand tongues proclaiming the love of Christ that Gaspar del Bufalo dreamed of many years earlier. After many more prayers and being still long enough to listen, I agreed to be one of the preachers on the Precious Blood Parish Mission team.

I was really nervous when I arrived in Dayton, Ohio, to preach in my first mission. It was a joint mission hosted by Holy Trinity (a Precious Blood parish) and Corpus Christi (a diocesan parish.) Fr. Dan Torson, C.P.P.S, Sr. Donna Liette, C.P.P.S and I were the preachers. I was provided a place to stay by the Precious Blood Sisters at their motherhouse, Salem Heights. There my self-confidence was lifted and my faith and understanding of Precious Blood spirituality was

strengthened to new heights! I met so many holy women who were well up in years of age yet still very active. Almost every one of them would go out of her way to tell me she was praying for us to have a successful mission.

The sisters invited me to sit with them at their table to share a meal. Several of them would wait up for me to come home after the mission was over so we could sit at table again, drink hot tea, eat ice cream and share our stories. The hospitality was of true Precious Blood quality. I got a real feel of what St. Gaspar wanted for his mission houses—a place to sit at table together, pray together, share our truths, play together and support one another in each one's own ministry. It is one thing to read about it and talk about it, but it is something else to experience it.

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The prayers of the sisters were answered; we had a successful mission and our evaluations were good, but I must say that I received much more than I contributed!

I have preached in other missions and retreats since then and each time it is a real faith builder. Listening to the other team members preach and share their Precious Blood spirit and stories just solidifies the Precious Blood charism in my life. One of the beautiful parts of our parish mission team is that each of us come from totally different walks of life and have different experiences of God and different experiences of the spirit of the Blood. It doesn't seem to matter with whom I work in a mission, at which church, or what part of the country the mission is held, God's grace is always there like a warm, comforting blanket, covering me and keeping me feeling warm and cozy inside. I guess you could say, working on a parish mission is my "happy spot."

### **Making Covenant:**

#### **Experiencing Precious Blood Spirituality**

**W**e talk about Precious Blood spirituality in our community meetings all the time but when we are asked what it means, it is not real easy to explain. I've heard it explained, "It is not so much of what it is, but it is who you are or who you become. You have to experience it to recognize it." This is true, but people need a little guidance to recognize where to look for it. When we sat and

named aspects of Precious Blood spirituality and where it connects with our lives, it became a real, living concept.

In naming the elements that constitute Precious Blood spirituality, it gives us a good reason to look at ourselves closely to identify that particular aspect in our own lives.

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When I examine the covenants of my life and how they have impacted my life, the first covenant I can remember making was when I was baptized in the Baptist Church at the age of eleven. I made a covenant that I would be a child of God and live by the Holy Word. I thought it would be easy to keep my part of that covenant, but then things happened in my life and I wandered in the desert for about 25 years. It took courage and faith for me to return to that covenant but God was there with open arms to welcome me back. Actually, God had to nudge me pretty hard to get my attention, but he remained faithful to that covenant. It has taken a lot of growing in my faith to fulfill my part of that covenant promise.

My second covenant was with my husband in a marriage covenant. I thought that would be an easy covenant to keep and life would be rosy. After all, we were really in love. I had no idea that he would squeeze the toothpaste tube in the middle and he had no idea that I would snore. Both of us have had to work at that covenant, but we have remained there for each other. Just like that covenant with God—it takes work, faith and commitment.

I made a covenant with God and the Catholic Church to be a Catholic and be faithful to the gospels. As a Godmother, I've made a covenant to God, to the Church and to some children that I would help them to grow in the faith. I've made a covenant with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood as a Companion. I've had to study to educate myself about the community and their charism and work at being a good Companion.

My goal is to help people identify the covenants in their lives that were made with love in order to recognize the love with which God made the covenant. With all these covenants, they start out rather childlike or immature in the beginning, but as we work at them and keep God's presence in them, they continue to mature and grow. Precious Blood people are covenant people.

## A Community of the Cross

**T**he cross is a big part of our Precious Blood spirituality. We've all had someone to help us carry our crosses in life and we, in turn, have helped others carry their crosses. During the parish missions, I share about the cross my husband and I helped my stepson carry when he was diagnosed with AIDS.

We carried that cross out of love, not to make him feel guilty. The way society treated Jeff from childhood until his death, we felt that he was nailed to a cross over and over. Since he was our son whom we loved so much, we felt the pain of that cross many times. At the same time, we could feel strength and hope from a loving God who stood with us through it all. I share how members of the Precious Blood Community walked with us and held us up through our grief.

The wonderful message in all these stories is that Jesus walks with us as we carry our own crosses and he died on the cross out of love for us, not to make us feel guilty for putting him on the cross. Our goal as a mission people is to help people recognize that awesome, merciful, unconditional love of God through his ultimate sacrifice on the cross.

During the parish missions, we ask the people to come venerate the cross in a spirit of thankfulness, not a spirit of guilt, for that loving sacrifice he made for us all. It is a humbling, spiritual experience every time I watch people coming to the cross and embracing it out of a feeling of love. We have seen husbands and wives, mothers and daughters, groups of young people, and families all come together to the foot of the cross, embracing the cross and one another at the same time. Can you imagine what our community would be like if we all came to the foot of the cross together in a true spirit of love? There would be no room for jealousy, greed, power struggles or spitefulness.

## Reconciliation Stories

**O**n the third night of our mission, we celebrate being reconciled by the Blood of Christ. This is the part of my personal life that needs the most work. We live in a culture where we are always supposed to win and if we don't win, then we try to at least get even.

I remember a time when I had left a job with lots of baggage and hard feelings. I was wounded and hurting. Recognizing my brokenness, I started a reconciliation garden across a little creek in my backyard. I

*It is a humbling, spiritual experience every time I watch people coming to the cross and embracing it out of a feeling of love.*

dug out old grass, pulled thousands of weeds and tilled and dug up a good measure of dirt. Through it all, I sweated gallons of water, I shed many a

tear and prayed many a prayer. I talked to God a lot and I thought I had listened well.

At the end of about three years of this, I thought I was fully reconciled with those who had hurt or angered me. I was ready for a new assignment from God. I sat in my swing with my eyes

closed, listening to all the nature sounds around me, listening to the silence at times, praying with all the faith I had. I said the prayer, “God, just show me what you want me to do.” I fully expected to get some kind of a message or hint of a call to a ministry of some kind. Instead, the picture came across my eyes of me washing the feet of the people who had hurt me.

That wasn’t at all what I expected or wanted to see or hear. I immediately opened my eyes and said aloud, “God, that wasn’t what I had in mind and furthermore, you must be kidding.”

Needless to say, I spent a few more years pulling weeds and digging in the dirt before I *really* reconciled with those who hurt me. After careful examination, I realized I needed to ask a couple of them to forgive me. I needed to let my feet be washed also.

It is in telling our own stories and naming where we feel the presence of God in our own lives that people can recognize God’s presence in theirs. In telling our personal reconciliation stories, we give an opportunity for people to feel their own need for a reconciliation experience.

On this third night of the mission, we offer the sacrament of reconciliation for those who feel the desire. We also offer a place where a person can talk with the sister or lay person if they don’t want the sacrament or sometimes they want to talk to a layperson before they go for the sacrament. We also offer an empty chair for a person to talk to if the person they need to talk to is dead or gone away or also if they feel like they are not quite ready to talk personally to someone yet. I am always amazed at the number of people that take advantage of these other options. People have told us how being able to talk to a person who has had similar experiences has been of such a benefit to them—in some cases to get ready to receive the sacrament or to just cope or rectify a situation. One person said, “Thanks for listening with loving ears.”

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## The Cup of Blessing

**T**he last night of the mission, we celebrate Mass together and focus on the cup—our cup of salvation and blessing cup. There is no better way to end the mission than to gather around the table to share the body and blood of Christ. One common thing I have heard from every mission or retreat is how the mission team becomes a part of their parish for a week, taking time to get to know people and visit with them and be part of them.

At each location and each parish, it has been a great privilege to be able to join in some of the activities in the communities and bring our

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message of the abundant love of God. We have visited shut-ins, brought the mission to assisted living facilities, celebrated Mass with the school children, met and talked with the school children, had breakfast and morning prayer with a youth group and took part in a prayer vigil at the spot where a murder was committed calling for an end of violence.

We must always keep in mind that the most important mission we can ever present is how we live our lives and how we treat those with whom we come into contact in all our walks of life: at home, with family, at work, at church and most of all, with those whom we find hard to love.

In my job as a real estate agent, I find many ways that I can help people realize a divine presence in the events of their lives. I deal with cases of divorce, death of a spouse, an older person having to give up a home they love to go to a nursing home and the joy of a young couple buying their first home. If I can help in some way to give them hope and recognize that God is with them through it all, I feel that I have answered my call to be a Precious Blood missionary.

St. Francis said it best: “Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words.”



## For Reflection

- ❑ Do you recognize a place or an activity in your life that you can call your “happy spot?”
- ❑ What about it makes you happy? How and with whom do you share that joy?
- ❑ If you were asked to name your mission in life, what would it be? Name something specific. Think of ways you can carry out that mission.
- ❑ I’ve named four aspects of our Precious Blood spirituality: covenant, cross, reconciled through the Blood and the cup. Name a time these four were present in your life experiences. How did they impact your life? Did it help your faith to grow? How?



*Ann Tucker is a Companion of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in the Kansas City Province, making her first covenant in 1993. She has served on various committees in the community. Presently she is on the Formation Committee in the Kansas City Province. She served as the RCIA Director at St. James Church in Liberty, Missouri, and is presently the coordinator for Small Christian Communities. She is a graduate of New Wine, a three year lay ministry training program. She is a core team member of the Precious Blood Parish Missions Ministry. She loves to preach, share her faith and her experience of God. Ann is a wife, a mother and proud grandmother.*



*Precious Blood people are covenant people.*



# The New Covenant

By Madeleine Kisner, ASC

Covenant  
Unbroken  
Forever.

God's Love-laws,  
Hearts-engraved,  
In all lives.

God's Knowledge,  
Life-woven,  
Understood.

Last Supper  
Cup offered  
All renewed

In His Blood!

