**Script for March 18 PBSI**

**How does your community define Precious Blood spirituality?**

We have chosen three quotes from our **Constitutions** which express our Precious Blood Spirituality:

“Faithful to our heritage and rooted in prayer, we seek to carry forward our mission of reconciliation through the Precious Blood of Jesus as he continues to reconcile all creation to the Father. Called to be a sign of his continuing presence in the world, we strive for personal holiness as we allow Christ to use us as instruments of his redeeming love.” (#3)

Our religious consecration as Precious Blood sisters intensifies the apostolic mission given us in Baptism and Confirmation to carry on the redemptive work of Christ in the world. We are sent to be in our very persons an expression of his love and worship of the Father and of his loving service to others. (#20)

Our spirituality as Precious Blood Sisters is rooted in the liturgical celebration of the Paschal Mystery. (#16)

**What are the unique aspects of the definition that come from your history/charism/members?**

Our community began as a group of women choosing to live a contemplative life of reparation for the evil that they saw in the world around them. Through the “circumstances and events of time” (#1), the Sisters recognized that they were being called into the active apostolate. However, they remained deeply rooted in their contemplative relationship with God expressed through personal and communal devotion to the Precious Blood of Christ.

In 1918, Msgr. Martin B. Hellriegel was appointed chaplain of our Motherhouse in O’Fallon. He was very active in the liturgical movement at the time and encouraged our community to ground our individual and communal lives and prayer in the spirituality of the Paschal Mystery as celebrated through the Church’s liturgy. He “tried out” many elements of this spirituality such as the “dialogue” Mass and offertory processions with the sisters at the Motherhouse, which he invited others in the liturgical movement to observe. Our sisters incorporated what they were learning into their spirituality. Daily Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours became the core of their community prayer, and they set aside some of their traditional Precious Blood devotions in favor of this more liturgical community prayer.

For example, when we entered the congregation in 1959, one of the practices that was a part of our formation was Mass Text preparation, particularly the Sunday text, but also daily preparation. This preparation included reading from authors such as Pius Parsh, and I recall that during our novitiate we were assigned the task of writing our reflections in the form of an essay. For me this novitiate practice of grounding my spirituality in the liturgy has continued to be meaningful for my life.

 **How is the spirituality lived out?**

This commitment to the liturgical life of the Church influenced how we deepened our living as signs “of his continuing presence in the world.” The active ministries in which our community members were engaged (schools, day cares, ecclesiastical arts, parish ministry, etc.) reflected and was sustained by our communal and individual participation in the liturgy.

Our sisters incorporated this liturgical spirituality into their teaching ministry and even developed catechetical materials that were published. Sr. Mary Pierre, for example, wrote “The Easter Passage” as her dissertation and subsequently taught liturgy at the archdiocesan seminary. Many of the priests testify that they owe their love for the liturgy to her. The EAD adopted liturgical symbols as the prime means of decorating their vestments and paraments. (For example, we always use our red vestment with the Paschal Lamb when celebrating on the Feast of the Precious Blood.) The sisters embraced the beauty of the Gregorian chant. After Vatican II, when the vernacular was used for worship, Sr. Alphonse Marie composed a series of *Plainsong Propers* which adapted the chant to the English translation of the liturgy.

In 1971 a renewal team was appointed to assist us in deepening our congregation’s relational and spiritual life. Later, as we had more lay persons ministering with us in our schools and other sponsored institutions, we saw a need to assist them in understanding and living our charism in their ministry with us. In 1996, we had a community process during which we gathered people with whom we were serving in various active ministries for a time of reflection on how they would identify the core values they experienced in their service with us. As a result, the following core values were identified and resonated with our communal self-understanding. These are hospitality, presence, reconciliation, and response to human needs.

More recently in 1989, we established a program for associates which we named “Partners in Mission.” It provides a means for lay persons to become deeply identified with our charism and share in our life and ministry. (*Partners in Mission* Photo)

**How can our spirituality be applied to what is happening in the world today?**

In our 2016 Chapter direction statement, we challenged one another to take bold action in regard to issues of our world’s suffering. We chose to focus our efforts on the persons involved in immigration. We spent 6 years educating ourselves, praying for and making donations to support persons involved in direct ministry with refugees, and volunteering with organizations that serve immigrants. We brought in speakers who worked at the border with refugees. Several of our Partners and Sisters answered the call to assist refugees at our southern border, and we purchased and sent socks and belts to replace those taken away from persons applying for refugee status there.

Our 2022 Chapter statement gives direction for responding to the current situation of a world torn apart by war, and critically environmentally stressed: *We, Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, through our prayer and contemplative way of being, live with energy, mutual respect, gratitude, hope and joy. Conscious that our personal and communal life is limited, precious, and a gift, we choose to love more deeply. In this moment of our history, we will give from our vulnerability and our blessedness. We choose to be Christ’s reconciling presence in our increasingly divided world as a witness to Christ’s healing love. We will take risks in whatever circumstances God places in front of us. We do this to accomplish God’s mission of bringing love and hope to a suffering interconnected planet.*

The heart of our spirituality, therefore, is relationship: relationship with God, with one another, with others, with the Earth. These relationships flow out of our prayer and participation in the Paschal Mystery as celebrated in the liturgy of the Church. Originally, this rootedness in the liturgical life of the Church led us to value communal participation in daily Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. While this is still a value, because of age and current reality in the Church, daily participation is not always possible. However, communal and individual prayer grounded in the Paschal Mystery continues to sustain our community as we strive to “be Christ’s reconciling presence in our increasingly divided world.” Our Chapter Commitment calls us to “live with energy, mutual respect, gratitude, hope and joy” during our final years as a congregation. We commit to “give from our vulnerability and our blessedness” taking “risks in whatever circumstances God places in front of us”.

 You may have noticed our background: “THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE.” This is Jesus’ message in John 17:21 and is on the wall above the tabernacle in our O’Fallon chapel. For us this is God’s dream and the essence of our call to be women of reconciliation or as we quoted from our Constitutions: “Our religious consecration as Precious Blood sisters intensifies the apostolic mission given us in Baptism and Confirmation to carry on the redemptive work of Christ in the world. We are sent to be in our very persons an expression of his love and worship of the Father and of his loving service to others.” (#20) “THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE.”