



C.P.P.S. Resources - 22

A PRECIOUS BLOOD READER

**Compiled by
Barry J. Fischer, C.P.P.S. and
Robert J. Schreiter, C.P.P.S.**

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C.P.P.S. Resource No. 22

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C.P.P.S. Resources

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FOREWORD

During the XVIth General Assembly which took place in Rome during the month of September, 1995, the idea of publishing a booklet of contemporary readings on the spirituality of the Precious Blood was discussed. The idea, which Fr. Anton Loipfinger had been promoting for some time, was readily accepted by the Assembly Delegates. And the General Council was commissioned to undertake such a publication as an integral part of their ministry of animation.

The idea was to select a reading for each day of the month, relatively short and reflecting a contemporary vision of the Precious Blood Spirituality. We would try to be as cross-cultural and diverse as possible, including writings and reflections from the various provinces, vicariates, and missions and the larger Precious Blood family. At times we were limited in our research due to the language barrier and in some cases because we did not always have every bulletin and publication of the community available to us.

Following the Assembly, Fr. Robert Schreiter and I began to glean through the materials at hand in the Generalate Archives. We were pleasantly surprised to discover the amount of really worthwhile material on the subject which has been published around the world during the past fifteen years. We collected so many good reflections, that at the moment of selection, we could not include them all. Those not included here will be materials for future publications, depending on the acceptance of the present one.

Who do we hope to reach with this "Precious Blood Reader"? Our objective first of all is to reach every member of our Congregation, the Union of the Blood of Christ, Companions, Associates, Candidates and anyone else interested in discovering a contemporary vision of Precious Blood Spirituality with pastoral implications. The reader is organized in such a way that a person can take a reading a day for his or her personal reflection. It can also be used as a valuable tool for group reflections with companions, candidates in formation, parish groups, and so forth. And, we encourage you to do so! We encourage the

provinces to translate it into the various languages spoken in the Congregation so that we can all grow towards a more unified focus and language as we drink from the wells of our Precious Blood Spirituality.

Our special gratitude goes to the people who have contributed to this Reader and to all through the past decade and a half who have enriched all of us with their reflections and insights. And we certainly encourage our members to continue their search for a spirituality of the Precious Blood which is vital for our contemporary world. In future publications we hope to be able to include articles for reflection which mirror even better the internationality and the plurality of cultures which characterize our Congregation today and which will mark us ever-more so as time goes on.

Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S.
Moderator General

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To

**P. Anton Loipfinger, C.P.P.S.
Fourteenth Moderator General**

**Who first conceived of this Reader
and did so much to promote a renewed
spirituality of the Precious Blood**

COMMUNITY

1. Challenges to Our Identity and Mission

It is a pleasure for me to meet you during the celebration of your Fifteenth General Chapter which you are holding in this city where your Founder was born and exercised part of his priestly ministry — the great missionary and apostle of the Blood of Christ, Saint Gaspar del Bufalo. It is significant that this meeting takes place almost on the eve of the day in which your Congregation and the Diocese of Rome celebrate the liturgical memorial of this Saint. Like so many of the faithful, we too go in spirit to his tomb in the ancient church of Santa Maria in Trivio, as did my predecessor Pope John XXIII, on January 4, 1963, to meditate on the lessons of his life and to beg his heavenly favors.

More than a few times Pope John XXIII linked Saint Gaspar in a symbolic way to the devotion to the Most Precious Blood, going so far as to call him 'the true and greatest apostle of the devotion to the Most Precious Blood in the world'. Saint Gaspar invites us to reflect on the mystery of the Blood of Christ flowing forth from the side of 'him whom they have pierced' (Jn. 19:37). What boundless horizons this reflection opens up to us! On the one hand, that Blood, shed violently for the injustices of mankind, is the symbol of every violence perpetrated in the history of mankind, beginning with the cry of the blood of Abel (cf. Gen. 4:10) until the end of the world. On the other hand, that Blood can be seen as a symbol of the whole work of salvation, which, originating from the Father, reaches even to us and is spread throughout the world for the salvation of all through the ministry of the Church of God 'which he obtained with the blood of his own Son' (Acts 20:28). In the vision of faith of your holy Founder, the Blood of Christ is an image of the Redeemer's perfect love for us, and calls for a response of faithful love of God and of our brethren.

In his assiduous study of the word of God and of the holy Fathers of the Church, his contemplation of the Crucified Christ and his sufferings for the sake of the Church, Saint Gaspar delved deeply into the mystery of the Blood of the Redeemer, so much so that this mystery became the light of his spirit and the strength of his apostolic activity.

Dear brothers: I wish to repeat on this occasion the exhortation I made on October 22, 1986, on the second centenary of the birth of your Founder: 'The spirituality of Saint Gaspar...is truly at the heart of the Christian life: the Most Precious Blood of our Lord has always been the object of a special attention on the part of all the Saints: it is the school of sanctity, of justice, of love...Never cease...to delve deeply into this mystery of justice and of love: diffuse it into the whole world.'

I was pleased to be informed of the meetings and studies which you have been conducting on this subject in the various parts of the world where your Congregation works. I wholeheartedly bless these efforts and encourage you to continue them, and to model on the cult of the Precious Blood the spiritual path of your lives and your apostolic activity. Be witnesses of that communion which Christ brought about through the gift of his Blood.

I am certain that Saint Gaspar, in this spiritual pilgrimage that we make together to his tomb, can speak to you not only as the Apostle of the Blood of Christ, but also as a great missionary. After his return from exile in February of 1814 and in response to the wishes of Pope Pius VII who strove to revive the faith among the Christian people by means of popular missions, your Founder devoted himself to the preaching of missions and spiritual retreats up until his death in 1837. In the ministry of preaching, he emulated his special patron, Saint Francis Xavier. For the most efficacious and lasting exercise of that ministry he founded your Society: the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Most Precious Blood, entrusting it to the heavenly protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was firmly convinced that just as the faith is spread through preaching of the word of God, so through the same preaching 'its revival is awaited' (Writings of Saint Gaspar, XII, 48). Your Founder is a model of evangelization, whom you must always imitate.

In the General Chapter which you are celebrating, you have studied the specific topic of the mission of your Congregation, making an analysis of the situation in the various places where you work in order to meet present challenges according to the charism of your Congregation. This charism, in fact, is the ministry of the word of God, as stated in the Constitution of your Congregation. In a society which too often ignores the signs of the presence of God, you must be the word that knocks at the door of every human heart, so that it may open to receive the Savior. In a society which often fails to uphold human dignity, especially the dignity of the poor, you must awaken the voice of conscience that sustains the primacy of truth and love. You are called to do this in many forms of apostolic activity but especially through the preaching of spiritual exercises, retreats and missions (cf. CIC, can. 770).

My dear brothers: I fervently hope that the teachings which we have learned from the life of your Founder — contemplation of the mystery of the Blood of Christ and commitment to the ministry of the word — will be an inspiration for your personal and communitarian renewal, so that you may present yourselves to the people of God, not only as teachers of the word, but also as convinced witnesses to Christ, who loved us and gave his Blood for us (cf. Gal. 2:20).

I commend your Congregation to the intercession of the Ever-Virgin Mary, and gladly impart to you my Apostolic Blessing.

(Message of Pope John Paul II to the Members of the XV General Assembly, Rome, October 19, 1989)

An anniversary, whether personal or of the community, is also a time to reflect upon one's life. In so doing, we Missionaries of the Precious Blood must ask for forgiveness:

- because we have not always been faithful to our vocation as Missionaries of the Precious Blood,
- for not dedicating ourselves more intensely to the preaching of the Word of God,
- for not irradiating a deep devotion and a spirituality of the Precious Blood,
- for the deficiency in our endeavor of community living,

- which should be a true sign of solidarity to all,
 - for our slowness in showing compassion and charity,
 - for not giving preference to the poor and neglected.
- On the personal level we ask forgiveness:
- for our individualism and selfishness,
 - for being lax in our commitments,
 - for giving example which, many times, scandalizes,
 - for our lack of witness,
 - for not giving up all to follow the Lord (“I’ll follow you Lord, BUT...”),
 - for our pharisaic attitude which demands of others more than what we ourselves are willing to give,
 - for not living our celibacy as a convincing sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God and of a love that is free and mature.

As Community we ask forgiveness:

- for our incapacity to work together and develop a clear projection of our Vicariate,
- for our different models of Church and individual interests when they keep us from acquiring a clear identity as Precious Blood Missionaries,
- for not always accompanying the laity in the development of their Christian vocation and in their desire to live the Precious Blood spirituality,
- for not knowing how to tap the talent and vision of our members, and simply reacting in the face of immediate needs, without taking risks and without venturing into new apostolic challenges,
- for not having the wisdom to trustingly choose youth who want to follow the Lord in the Consecrated Life,
- for not accompanying the people in their aspirations and in their holistic development,
- for not taking up the cause of the poor and for not standing beside them in the conquest of their just rights.

We ask forgiveness for all of this and for much more. We ask forgiveness of the Lord and of the People of God. In some way, I hope that this celebration be the manifestation of our desire to correct our errors and by the grace of God, experience a sincere conversion. May the Lord help us to have a better understand-

ing of our identity and to be a community more united and more faithful to its mission and to the challenge of our Founder.

By means of a contemplative life and persistent prayer, we could grow in our faith, discover our prophetic mission and respond to our Church which calls us to renewal and conversion.

(Fr. Larry Eiting, C.P.P.S., from his last homily, preached on the Feast of St. Gaspar, October 21, 1990, Santiago, Chile)

2. Where the Blood Leads Us

When we reflect on how to live out our charism in the future, we must begin with the world in which we live and then see how our charism speaks to that world, rather than the other way around. Thus, we do not seek to fit the world into Precious Blood spirituality, but rather we ask what faithful and prophetic word a Precious Blood spirituality can speak to the world as we understand it. This, it seems to me, has to be an ongoing task of our discernment. It will mean that how our charism is enacted will differ from time to time and place to place. Rather than seeing this as a fracturing of our spirituality, it should be understood as a potential enrichment. Think, for example, what the prophetic witness of our sisters and brothers in Latin America and in Liberia has meant to how we have come to understand our vocation and spirituality here in North America! Or what the ministry of reparation the Carmel of the Precious Blood in Dachau has taught us about the mystery of Christ’s blood. A genuine charism is one that continues to unfold, meeting the challenges of each new time and place. And I deeply believe that our charism is one that can address the challenges that the dawning of the third millennium can offer us. Our challenge, then, is not a once-for-all determination of the meaning of our charism, but an on-going seeking of its message for the times and places in which we find ourselves.

I would like to suggest that the world into which we are now moving calls us to focus the resources of our charism in three ways. These three are: intensify our focus on building communities, engaging in a ministry of reconciliation, and celebrating the Eucharist in a renewed way.

We are called to intensify our focus on building communities

because of the challenges to community in the near and future world, and because voices long excluded need to be heard and welcomed. Some of the threats to community have already been outlined: divisions between generations, between cultures within the same city or nation, the dysfunctional nature of some of our families. And we need to hear voices too often excluded: the voices of women long silenced or ignored, the newcomers who speak in accents unfamiliar to us, and those we pretend do not exist—gay men and women, the disabled.

But our task is more than welcoming. Among ourselves, too, we need to create communities that have vibrant identities. Here, perhaps we have the most to do in overcoming a 1960's mentality when the deconstruction of restrictive and dysfunctional communities (we didn't use those words then) was meant to clear the way for new forms of community. Have those new forms of community emerged? To what extent have we simply been carried along by the powerful forces of individualism of the culture? In the case of my own congregation, it is interesting to hear our Companions raise frequently the question about vision and identity. One way to read that is that it isn't clear to them what they are associating themselves with. And that might mean that, even though the three U.S. provinces are welcoming of Companions, they can't articulate an identity. The same may hold for prospective candidates looking to join our ranks as brothers and sisters. The intensive search for community that is likely to be part of our larger future is also a call to us to deepen our own sense of identity.

Secondly, we are being called to focus the resources of our charism by engaging in a ministry of reconciliation. In places like Liberia, Chile or Guatemala, what is needed is clear enough. Within our immediate context, that will involve reaching out to victims of abuse, those alienated from the Church, the victims of racism, and families rent apart by divorce and dispute. Reconciliation is a ministry that cannot be entered lightly, and at best we are but agents of God's reconciling work, 'ambassadors on Christ's behalf', as Paul puts it. But given the many ways the world is pulled apart, surely this is a ministry to which our charism calls us. It is a complex ministry: it involves learning to tell the truth in the midst of a tangle of lies.

It involves listening and then listening again to the stories of broken lives until those lives and those stories can be healed. It involves helping see how God is restoring what is broken or lost in someone's life.

Third, we must learn to celebrate the Eucharist in a renewed way. David Power, in a book published last year, says that, at the end of the twentieth century, we celebrate the Eucharist in the ruins — the ruins of our optimistic visions of progress, in the ruins of holocaust and genocide, in the ruins of a collapsed world order. The Eucharist has always been the flash point for larger issues as well. Today that flash point involves the use and abuse of power within the Church and the exclusion of women from important forms of ministry.

How do we celebrate the Eucharist in a world of ruins, amid the intense search for community, amid the yawning divides in our world crying out for reconciliation? It involves remembrance of the sufferings and pain of our world — explicit remembrance, so that those stories can be taken up in the story of the suffering of Christ. But it involves also prophetic remembrance, a remembrance that not only speaks of the past, but lets the past speak to the future and judge the present. If the celebration of the Eucharist is to intensify our communities, it must be a celebration of the whole community and not just the ministers presiding. And it must offer freely God's grace of reconciliation, a gift greater than any of us and beyond anything we can do.

To put it in a single phrase the challenge of the dawning of the third millennium for us, dedicated in service through the blood of Christ, is to make connections. We must make connections in a polarized and atomized world. We must make new connections where the false connections of abuse, addiction, racism and oppression now prevail. And we must make connections by being agents of God's reconciliation. We make connections when we struggle to speak the truth. We make connections when we celebrate how the story of God's redeeming work in Christ continues to redeem our world today.

To do all of this faithfully and effectively, we need to engage the resources of our spirituality. In order to build community, we look again to the blood of the Covenant. What does covenant

mean in our time of temporary connections, of short-term commitment, of voluntaristic association? What kind of covenant is worth dying for to bring about, as did Christ? What are the markers that define the circle of covenant? We have much to think about in understanding covenant, and how the blood of Christ draws the line around it, a line of suffering, commitment and passion.

How might we become agents of reconciliation? How might we learn to tell the truth in the midst of so many lies? How can we embrace the anguish of those overcoming the terror of those lies and the pain they have inflicted? How can we point to God's grace welling up in the midst of a broken life and calling it to a new wholeness? How do we learn to 'plead with Christ's blood before God,' as is pictured in the Letter to the Hebrews? How do we bring those once far off near through the Blood of Christ? Again, our challenge is to search that rich spirituality of reconciliation for answers.

All of this shows itself as we celebrate the Eucharist, as we enact that great offering once again. Especially as we offer that cup of suffering and salvation to one another, and as we accept the challenges it offers us, how deeply we are committed to covenant, how well we serve as agents of reconciliation, will become apparent. We must not drink it to our condemnation, as the Apostle reminds us, but to our salvation.

Making connections in a world of bad connections and no connections at all. The challenge to us is clear enough. The resources given us in a spirituality of the blood of Christ are powerful. The work that lies ahead of us is daunting. But for the world to be reconciled in Christ, for it to become that New Jerusalem, we must do our part in the up building of God's holy Reign.

The millennium will soon be upon us. The challenges it brings are already in our midst. Christ hangs there crucified, in the ruins, 'outside the gates,' as the Letter to the Hebrews has it. We can only but echo Hebrew's response: 'therefore let us go out to meet him, and bear the insult he bore.'

(Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S. from an Address at the Second Precious Blood Congress, St. Louis, Missouri, August 2-5, 1993)

3. The Roots of Our Being Together

The inspiration bestowed on Francis Albertini evolved historically and ecclesially from its initial expression in a lay form; this led eventually to other concretizations in a priestly form and several religious forms. The gift bestowed on Albertini in prayer could thus be called the "original charism" which later manifested itself in the lives and mission of other key figures who in turn possessed unique charisms of their own. Admittedly, the later forms can trace their descentance from the original more or less directly. Still, the historical details outlined here indicate the good reason why Albertini can be referred to as "the common father" of the charism's several manifestations. For the Work which Gaspar, Maria, and others were called to shape and direct — and here they are unequivocally the founders of their respective congregations — was essentially one, springing from an original inspiration given to the Archconfraternity's founder.

This implies some crucial things for the ongoing vitality of the charism in the Church and world today. The first is the need to retrieve the charism's origin which, as we have seen, lies within a lay association from which its priestly and evangelical forms emerged. Such a recovery is made the more urgent by two phenomena of postconciliar experience: declining membership in religious institutes, and the increasing involvement of the lay faithful in all sectors of ecclesial life and activity. A careful review of the charism's origin — the "constant return to the sources of the whole of Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of (religious) institutes" (*Perfectae Caritatis* 2) would serve as a response to these developments ensuring the charism's thorough renewal and future survival.

This process of retrieval is not suggested, however, merely out of practical concerns which, by themselves, are an inadequate motive for engaging the charism so radically. On the contrary, a return to the origin is proposed here primarily for theological and spiritual reasons. For the charism's differentiation by state of life (lay, priestly, religious) and by gender reflects the unity-in-diversity which traverses the whole of Christian revelation and experience. In other words, when the charism is seen in relation to the mysteries of trinitarian and ecclesial

communion, it seems to possess a singular capacity to reflect Christian truth and life. Fidelity to the charism's deeply inclusive nature thus poses a challenge to its recipients, a challenge to model a fruitful interrelationship between the states of life and between men and women — the charism's various forms belonging equally, though distinctly, to the one ecclesial reality designated by the comprehensive term "albertinian charism."

Implementing such an effort might also imply a reassessment of the canonical status of the charism's ecclesial forms in light of their recovered interrelationship. What calls for additional reflection, in line with ecclesiological and canonical developments scarcely conceivable when the charism made its first appearance, is the juridical form the charism might have taken if current possibilities and understandings were available to the founding figures. This further attempt to contemporize the charism by means of a thorough radicalization would help ensure that the charism's institutional expressions are fully congruent with its ecclesiality. A possible direction here might lead to a renewal of the charism through some form of organic unity-in-diversity that would respect the charism's full extension.

In point of fact, initiatives throughout the world are presently underway to renew especially the lay form of the albertinian charism. Some of these are consciously part of the Union of the Blood of Christ while others are not, though they all have some affinity with Albertini's vision and its earliest manifestation. These initiatives attest, moreover, to efforts designed to promote interrelationship between lay groups and the priestly and religious forms of the charism. The latter too are actively pursuing collaboration among themselves as witnessed by the work of the Precious Blood Leadership Conference and the Precious Blood Task Force.

Regarding lay forms of the charism, several approaches or levels of commitment are discernible which determine the scope of collaboration between the Missionaries, Adorers, other congregations committed to the blood of Christ, and their lay associates. At one end of the spectrum, laity are invited to share in the spirituality of these congregations through primarily devotional means, along the lines of a "prayer group" model. A sec-

ond level aims at a more thorough formation, both spiritual and apostolic, which envisions significant involvement on the lay affiliates' parts in the mission of the priestly and religious forms of the charism; such groups are intent on a program of Christian formation that includes regular meeting, study, prayer, support, and ministry. The third level of commitment asks lay members of Christ's faithful to be integrally involved in the life and mission of the sponsoring congregations, sharing in their spirituality and mission directly; a sense of mutual belonging is fostered at this level through any number of concrete means. The Companions Program among the Missionaries of the Blood of Christ in the United States is a particular effort to create an integral community among distinct forms of the albertinian charism.

As efforts in this regard are contemplated, and initial steps taken, it seems they can serve to verify something once said by the current Bishop of Rome, namely, that the charism and spirituality in question lies "at the heart of the Christian life." As such it is deeply planted in the mystery of faith and Christian existence, for its source is the same as that of the Church itself: the blood mixed with water flowing from the side of Christ, the sign and motive for ecclesial communion and mission: the source of our intimacy in the community founded in the blood of the cross.

(Fr. John Colacino, C.P.P.S., "Common Origins in the Charism of Francis Albertini," *The Wine Cellar*, February 1994, Vol. 1, Number 1, pp. 40-48)

4. Community Life and the Apostolate

When we reflect on arriving at a proper perspective of what community life means for us, it is important to clarify the nature of our community life together. Community life will mean one thing for the Trappists or for cloistered religious, while it will mean something quite different for our congregations engaged in the active apostolate. We need to recognize the **apostolic nature of our community**.

Community implies much more than just living under the same roof, eating a meal together, even praying together; it must become a place of honest communication in trust and

mutual respect. Community life should be a space in which we can share our deepest dreams and hopes which shape our identity, just as Gaspar and Maria de Mattias had dreams and were able to enthuse others with their dreams. That is how our communities were formed in the first place! And it is in the sharing of our histories and traditions and in transmitting them from one generation to another that we grow in communion and we reaffirm time and again who we are and what are the values which we share as a community. Living community life is about sharing in a profound respect and gratitude for the dreamers of yesteryear. In the Eucharistic Table whose dreams are shared and put onto the Table to be celebrated and remembered.

Often in community life, we have inflicted wounds on ourselves. The younger members at times in their impatience do not recognize the contributions and lifetime of hard work and dedication and Christian witness of their predecessors, and at the same time, it can be that the older members criticize and find fault with the ideas and initiatives of the younger members who search for new ways of expressing the charism and spirituality for this day. We need to somehow heal these wounds which, if left alone, can fester and embitter the spirit.

As religious communities under the title of the Blood of Christ, we are called to mission through the Blood. How important it is that we discern together where we hear and see the Cry of the Blood in today's world and in our day-to-day living! We are not mavericks. We are not individualists. We are in a community-with-a-mission. Too often we go about our business completely oblivious as to what the other person is doing. And unfortunately, sometimes we don't even care. We are so concerned about doing a good job ourselves!

We often boast that hospitality is a characteristic of our communities. Strangers and guests feel welcomed in our midst as we open our doors to receive them as we would receive Christ. Indeed living a true spirit of hospitality is an important part of our life in community.

Living hospitality in community life is much more than being good hosts to visitors, although this is important! But much more basic to the concept of hospitality is that of "breaking and sharing the bread of the Eucharist in our daily life

together". It is about being hospitable with those with whom we live. It is about opening the door of our hearts in order to invite our sisters and brothers in and inviting them to share themselves with us. It is about sharing with the other in our relations in community in the totality of our everyday life. This type of hospitality is not easy. It is surely much more difficult to be "hospitable" with the sister or brother with whom I live everyday than with a guest who is just passing through! How can we maintain an attitude of hospitality towards our fellow sisters and brothers without putting a label on them and boxing them in, often not permitting them to change or to grow? Are we hospitable with one another at the end of a long day when we gather together? Do we invite others with our attitudes and openness to share their stories and their experiences with us? Our spirituality invites us to be "Eucharist communities" opened to that quality of communication in the totality of our lives.

We are an apostolic community which wishes to model our lives on the ideal of community proposed in the Acts of the Apostles (2, 42-47). The yearning for communion is engraved in the soul of every human being of all times. We are a people marked by a Trinitarian God who is communion and relationship. Married couples, bound in the sacrament of Matrimony, are called to witness to the world and to all of us religious, the fidelity and the nature of God's love for all of us. And we are called also to be "sacraments of communion" for a broken and fragmented world. Reconciliation in community life is not an option which we can leave or take. It is a must! It is essential to our call. This call to prophetic witness is more important today than ever.

We are called to witness to the project of communion which God has for all of Creation! ***"I pray, Father, that they may be one, as You and I are one!" (John 17, 21)*** This is God's plan for all of humankind, spoiled by our sin and selfishness, but reconciled in the Blood of Christ! The quality of our communitarian witness is an important aspect of the "new evangelization" to which John Paul II summons us. We have been called to community for a common mission and our life shared in community will give authenticity to our apostolic lives of service.

We might call our "fraternal life in community" our *first apostolate*.

We are called to be **prophets of a new humanity**, witnesses and constructors in the world today of that divine Project for all. We must become **living sacraments of reconciliation** giving radical witness that the Reign of God and the community that God wills is possible! We give witness to this possibility, as we grow in communion with one another, even though as human beings we each have our own unique character, our different options, our different theologies and church models, our different talents and gifts, and yet we can live together in true love and respect. The competitiveness which so characterizes society today is discarded and replaced by a deep **respect and gratitude** for the differences which mark us and which only add to our collective beauty.

We celebrate this sacramentality especially when we gather at the Eucharistic Table and when we can look each other in the eye and we know deep down that we are brothers and sisters. In a world where racism and prejudices abound and divide people and breed hatreds, we **celebrate our cultural diversities and are reconciled in them** when we share a Common Cup at the Eucharistic Meal. Then, and only then, can we say with Jesus: "This is my body and my blood given freely for you!" We promise each other fidelity and mutual care. We promise "to be there for one another" in one's need and we commit ourselves to forging unity and communion as we drink from the Cup, the Blood of Reconciliation. We thus become witnesses of reconciliation in diversity.

Living true community is both a gift and a task. It is a gift because Christ has opened the way for us with His death and resurrection. He has shown us the way and has conquered the sin that destroys community. Through His Blood we are healed and we are reconciled.

We are called to look upon Community in its proper perspective, as the place where we will find the Lord. We will learn to see our sisters and brothers as mediations of God's revelation to us and then we will never be too busy to open our hearts in hospitality to invite them in and to share the bread of life together. We need patience as God is patient with us, affirming

us with His love, in spite of our shortcomings and repeated failures. We must love one another with that same unconditional and endless love with which God loves us. And reconciling ourselves in community is also about forgiveness. We have all been hurt at one time or another. We all carry our wounds. And we have all hurt others and are still capable of doing it again.

But we should not be discouraged. The tensions, difficulties, misunderstandings and lack of unity we sometimes encounter in our imperfect communities also form part of God's Project of Communion for us. The road to a reconciled community necessarily endures the experience and the participation in the Passion and Death of Christ. The Paschal Mystery continues to be at the heart of the dynamics of community building. It is only in dying to our individualism and our selfishness that we will be able to be reborn to a new community life which will be a light in the midst of a fractured and divided world.

(Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S., "Towards a Reconciled Community Life," an address given at an International Spirituality Workshop for the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, Rome, September 1995.)

5. Community Identity

A spirituality of the Precious Blood is able to interpret and give direction to individual lives. It seems as if our call as members of the Society of the Precious Blood is to aid people in our ministry to come to the awareness that in the light of the Precious Blood, the price of our redemption, we can find meaning, purpose and direction in our lives.

First: What is it at the very bottom line that gives us a sense of identity as a member of the C.P.P.S.? As we look to the future, with the shortage of personnel we are already experiencing, what is going to keep us moving with a sense of purpose and direction, rather than just begrudgingly moving from one task to another?

I think a spirituality of the Precious Blood is a most obvious choice for all of us. There are many different ways of relating to God, many different spiritualities. We can't use all of them. I think the challenge for us is to use our ministry and apostolates as a source of continuing reflection on the mystery of the

Blood in our lives. The challenge for us, is to help people realize in their own struggles and sufferings that the cup of suffering can become the cup of salvation, and the blood of suffering and death can be sacrificed, made holy, to become the blood of resurrection and life.

A most obvious reflection is in the Eucharist we offer each day as the memorial of Christ's suffering and death. As we look out into the congregation, seeing the members of our Church — the Body of Christ— it is easy to look out and see Mr. and Mrs. Jones who are struggling with their marriage. And then there is old Miss Smith, the lonely depressed person, and the teenager who in the midst of depression tried to take his life. I'm sure that we all could think of our own examples.

The words we say "Take this all of you and drink from it. This is the cup of my blood...Do this in remembrance of me." Together we proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes again. We remember that this cup of suffering has been transformed into the cup of our salvation. In this ritual moment we "RE-MEMBER" the Body of Christ — we make Christ present in the midst of the suffering, pain and struggles of people gathered together. We call to mind in the ritual moment of life-blood that Jesus gives us to sustain us on our ways. It would seem very appropriate, in view of recent permission to distribute Communion under both species, that we members of the Society of the Precious Blood promote this practice in our parishes and houses. The Precious Blood serves as a very vivid reminder to the senses of the paschal mystery it symbolizes.

Through this common consecration, together we share value in the mystery of the blood source of death and life. Our common consecration, our profession, bring us together in the realm of the holy — transcending the limits and bounds that keep so many apart in our world. It is through this special consecration to the mystery of the Blood of Christ that we come to realize our interdependence as members of the Society. Together all Christians share a special consecration, a special bond that stems from baptism. We as members of the Society of the Precious Blood share an even more special bond.

I believe that rather than repeating devotional materials that served well in the past, the current spirituality of the

Precious Blood needs to be with us all the time. It should be at the very center of our lives, that we utilize this all the time, that we cannot get the Blood off our hands or out of our lives. This serves as a reminder to us of the invitation to the life and growth in our lives amidst the pain and suffering. As we continue to grow smaller as a community, we will become pulled in many more new and varied directions. To help us, we need to keep in the forefront of our minds and hearts that special life we share in the Precious Blood of Jesus. This bond keeps us together and sustains us, and will allow us to go out renewed and refreshed.

Most of us now wear the pin of the Society — the cross and chalice — on our lapel, a visual reminder of the cup of suffering and salvation, the cross of death and life. We wear it over our hearts. May this symbol remind us of the needs of the Church that cry out for the saving life-Blood of Jesus. Just as our blood circulates within our own bodies, coming to the heart and returning out to nourish the body — may we members of the Society of the Precious Blood remember the common bond we share. May that bond nourish and sustain us in our ministry so that we may give life to the hurting, starving, suffering and broken members of the Body of Christ. It has been and will continue to be for that reason that we together can say: Praise to the Precious Blood!

(Fr. Timothy McFarland, C.P.P.S., "Precious Blood Spirituality from a Parish Perspective," Cincinnati C.P.P.S. Newsletter, July 2, 1985)

OUR MINISTRIES

6. A Precious Blood Understanding for the Parish

I want to share with you the ways in which St. Mary's Parish works in the context of a Precious Blood ecclesiology. It begins with the vision of lay leadership. Several phrases of the pastoral council vision statement always stand out to me as examples of a Precious Blood spirit of thinking: "becoming a community of service," "developing each person's ministry," "in our eucharistic gatherings," "bringing us deeper union," "providing comfort in sorrow," and "confirming our hope."

One of the ways that we keep our priority on the ministry of the Word is the decision to have a parish mission every year in Spanish and English. As ministers of the gospel and the Word, we emphasize and are committed to providing for catechist training and certification.

Here at St. Mary's we have a vision of ourselves as gathered "and with your blood purchased for God from every race and tongue, of every people and nation," (Rev. 5: 9-10) to give praise to God by what we do in service to one another, and our God. The parish has a history of sponsoring Southeast Asian families and most recently of resettling a refugee family of eight from Eritrea. Not yet fulfilled, we glimpse the reign of God among us and are encouraged by God's free gift of grace to work together on the reign of God.

The concept of "reverse mission" has been introduced into the life of the parish. We have the unique opportunity here with the presence of several cultures rubbing shoulders to open our hearts to the richness embedded in each other's spirituality. There is a spirit of realizing that we have things to learn from one another: that one culture's ways do not dominate others, but that the gospel needs constantly to be received anew into our hearts.

Our parish has been very blessed by a number of prophetic people who call us to justice. In our times of violence and bloodshed we have pulled together to face the issues of gun control that wound our whole community here on the high plains. We've had a significant number of violent deaths in the parish. A parish under the banner of the Precious Blood comes to face these things.

We use glass vessels at the eucharist in order to make the Blood of Christ as visible a presence to all as possible.

Our decision-making process no longer includes voting. We decide things in a format of prayer, sharing, and consensus.

As I read over the phrases of a Precious Blood ecclesiology as written last summer, I am overwhelmed by the things we yet need to be doing here. But at the same time, I am encouraged by the number of people involving themselves in the enterprise of the reign of God.

The contents of a Precious Blood way of being church are very attractive to us and we can strive together to implement these values...There is interest in hearing from other parishes and ministries under the banner of the Precious Blood and what is growing and developing among them. I hope that this begins a dialogue among us about how we are becoming and being church as we carry out our apostolates in the framework of St. Gaspar, our founder and apostle of the Precious Blood.

(Fr. Alan Hartway, C.P.P.S., "Precious Blood Ecclesiology in a Parish," The New Wine Press, February 25, 1992, p. 75)

7. Standing with Prisoners

Our role as Church is to give witness to God's love for all peoples. But God's incarcerated children? I believe so. This can be a very enriching ministry. One can see the work of the Lord and be strengthened by it. It is one of the gifts that people usually don't expect when stepping foot into the jail. I am there to witness to the power and love of a God who lives among us. There is probably no place on earth where more people are searching for the presence of God in their lives. Certainly, I can think of no other place where there are so many Bibles, so many trying to experience God. The jail can be a very spiritual place.

But I also hear the question that has been put to me so

many times, "What about the victim?" And yet, the person sitting for years in jail, innocent under law, is also very much the victim. But, understanding that, raising the question, "what about the victim?" is a valid concern. As a Church, we need to reach out to all who suffer. As a Church we need to try to give witness to God's power to heal, God's willingness to heal. As a member of a religious community dedicated to the Precious Blood, I believe in the power of the blood to heal. I believe in the power of Christ-victim. I believe that Christ, being the ultimate victim, can heal the pain of one who has suffered. I believe, too, that the blood of Christ, given for our offenses, offers forgiveness to the one who asks. That stands radically in the face of our criminal justice system.

I have always thought reconciliation involved bringing the two together: the victim and the one who has caused the suffering. But in a jail setting, this goes against the grain of things. In the courts as well as in the jail, there is little concern for healing. For the most part it is physically and legally impossible to bring the victim together with the one accused outside the battle lines of the courtroom. It is obvious that often times there is more than one victim. The vast majority of those incarcerated in our jails are themselves victims of violence. There is also the reality of being victimized by the criminal justice system. It is a difficult thing to see the clear lines between victim and the accused. It can be very tempting, in light of the injustice of a system that overlooks the dignity of a person, to disregard the very existence of another victim. But, of course, it would be dishonest to do so. Certainly honesty is a prerequisite if ever there is to be healing. Part of that honesty is recognizing my pain, in this case the pain of the incarcerated, but also recognizing the pain of the victim. In both cases it is not something that happens overnight. There are times when sorrow is immediate—realizing the pain caused to another. But there are times, too, when the accused needs to first come to terms with all that is happening to him or her.

We never enter into the jail setting demanding remorse for the crime committed, as though it were just some ritual to be performed. But it is something for which we have to allow. We have to say by our presence that it is okay to have remorse. We

have to reflect a God so loving and forgiving that true sorrow is okay, that it doesn't make me less of a person. In a situation such as a jail, often times the minister is the only one who is there for no other reason but to be there.

The names of those who have been victims to the crime in the streets flow from my lips like a litany. So, too, do the names of those who are suffering from years and years of incarceration. In the midst of all this, where does the Church stand? What is my role as a minister in the jail? What is my role as a Christian? Is reconciliation something that is possible when there seems to be, at times, only victims? Can reconciliation even happen when the one responsible for the suffering either does not or cannot express the sorrow at having caused the pain? What if the victim, as is the case so many times, never hears the words, "I'm sorry?" Can reconciliation happen? Can Christ-victim offer the forgiveness necessary for reconciliation? Can Christ, who forgave as he hung on that cross, be the victim who offers us forgiveness even before we ask? Can the blood of Christ spilled on the cross bring forth that kind of healing?

I remember sitting in the courtroom when Leo, the young man accused of stabbing Alfonso, was finally brought before the judge. I couldn't help but look at Leo sitting there next to his lawyer. He had on a white shirt, obviously bought for him for this occasion. Alfonso, too, had on a borrowed white shirt. The two looked remarkably alike. They were both 19 years old. Then I looked over at the father of Leo as he sat in the courtroom. His eyes reflected a father's concern for his son. I was in court for Alfonso. I was there to be a support to him. He had almost died and I couldn't forget that. It wouldn't be fair to somehow set aside the pain of a young man who will continue to bear the scars—physically and emotionally.

But as I sat in that courtroom, I couldn't help but to feel like this had nothing to do with the two young men sitting there. It had nothing to do with me or the father of Leo. It had everything to do with the court proceedings.

I couldn't bring myself to want prison for this kid. The more I sat there, the more uncomfortable I felt. I felt uncomfortable, too, because I wasn't upset enough or bitter enough or seeking revenge enough. I didn't feel that I was totally there for

Alfonso. I almost felt like I had betrayed the violence that had happened to him. I was his family. I was the one who should be seeking justice—revenge. I felt like I was in a very evil place. That courtroom wasn't about healing or reconciliation, it was about continuing the crime.

I can't tell you how many times when I have walked in protest or stood in vigil against the death penalty or some other issue, that someone angrily has come up to me and said, "What about the victim? Don't you care at all about the victim?" Of course I do, but you can't explain it to them. They really don't want to hear it. Like sitting in that courtroom, I can't participate in the evil. Evil has never been conquered by evil. I have been to death row. There is life there. There are people there who have families and feelings and their pain is real. As a Christian, I can't ignore that. When we have a choice between life and death, a Christian has to choose life.

I have been privileged and blessed to have witnessed a God who very much lives among the people. I have seen the healing that comes in recognizing a God who knows suffering and pain and hurt. I have seen the hope that our faith, a faith rooted in forgiveness and love, can offer one who has many reasons to despair. I have witnessed liberation in the midst of incarceration.

Today, more and more, as members of a community that carries the name of the Precious Blood, we are called to be people of healing and reconciliation. As Christians, we can't really get around the call to live among those who are suffering from every form of violence. We must align ourselves with the poor and suffering.

(Fr. David Kelly, C.P.P.S., "A Time to Heal," *The Wine Cellar*, October 1994, pp. 27-38)

8. AIDS, Nursing and Blood

As I drove home against the setting sun I knew that a chapter in Mike's life had been closed and a new chapter had been opened for me. Mike, my good friend, gave up his life of suffering for eternal glory. I came to know Mike through my ministry on the Oncology Support Team. Mike was not a cancer patient, but due to the hemophilia, in addition to AIDS, he was being

cared for by one of the cancer specialists.

How did it all begin? My supervisor for the Support Team called me to ask if I could work with Mike. My question to myself, "Could I work with a person who had AIDS? Would I be afraid, did I have the courage?" I needed to answer quickly — someone was in need. I went to the hospital after I left my regular job for the day. I was not impressed by what I saw as my "new ministry." Mike was rather cool to me, in fact he turned his head toward the wall. I sat nearby. We shared silence. Eventually I was able to say, "Mike, I am here for you if I can do anything. Don't feel obliged to talk. I'll return in a few days."

My initial impression was one of frustration, but many jobs begin that way. My "job" became a "ministry" which spanned several months. It changed my life.

Mike was not a complainer, though he suffered very much. Due to the hemophilia Mike was hospitalized most of the last seven months of his life. In our frequent encounters we spoke of many things: life, death, pain, fear, and even of "getting well." My goal in being with Mike was not to proselytize but to show ordinary human care. I hope Mike felt that reaching out to him.

AIDS is a very popular topic these days. It is a frightening advance to society. It bears something of the stigma of leprosy. Would an AIDS patient rapidly confess that it is not the physical pain so much as the sense that he or she is "untouchable" that hurts the most? Mike and I did not discuss this in words. But at least between the two of us, he came to know less of the latter pain.

The disease ravages the body. If only I could read the heart and mind of Mike today, I wonder what he would say. Mike's days were long, he had ample time to think and in his own way he was praying for courage and strength. Many times I asked if he believed in prayer. His only reply, "Would I be here if I didn't believe?"

To describe the events of seven months would be a lengthy account. I would like to look only to the last week of Mike's life. Mike was losing ground with considerable weight loss, no appetite, and almost continuous vomiting. I am not a nurse and at times I wanted to run. Some days when I came to the hospi-

tal, he could not obtain nursing help as quickly as he needed it. I passed his door and heard his cry for help. I held his head, as my mother used to do when we vomited as kids. What else can you do? How can you comfort someone in such misery? I'd wash his face and hands after his ordeal.

Gradually I began to pray as I stood beside Mike's bed. My most sincere prayer was an offering of his life of pain and isolation. It was a plea to God to take Mike home. I witnessed suffering which I lack words to describe.

Due to the hemophilia, there were many blood problems involved for Mike. It was constantly a "loss of blood" — in small amounts to the lab technician and in large quantities in other ways. As an Adorer of the Blood of Christ I have frequently contemplated the "Mystery of the Blood." My personal spirituality has translated into "the Blood which gave us life" — and my own "giving of life" through care and compassion. To witness a blood transfusion is to witness life being pumped into the arteries of someone in need. To be aware of the mystery of the Blood of Christ is to be aware of new inner life being pumped into the system. I believe that I am called to help generate that inner Life through a spirituality that gives LIFE and HOPE. There is a feeling in my heart that part of this spirituality was transmitted to Mike.

In the last hours before Mike died, he gave his blood. It was not a pleasant sight to see blood pouring from his nose and mouth. The nurse suctioning and I was holding the hand of a person racked with pain and the loss of his precious blood. I was poignantly reminded of Jesus shedding his blood on the cross as Mike poured out his life blood in the final surrender of his body. It was an image I will never forget.

Is our generation called to the shedding of blood in this manner? Are we as religious called to minister to the people with AIDS by giving the "inner life" found in the Blood of Jesus? Who will bring LIFE to the dying, the ostracized, the untouchables? Who will stand by to see blood loss, aching limbs, hearts burdened with the pain of a rapidly spreading disease?

I believe we are called to share the Mystery of the Blood. We look to the blood of those who suffer, mingled with the Life-Blood we carry, and are graced with the power and freedom to

reach out and touch and to be ministers of LIFE. Will we who bear the name of the blood also walk away as their blood is spilled?

(*Sr. Jacinta Langlois, A.S.C., "The Mystery: Michael Gave His Blood," The New Wine Press, December 25, 1992*)

In my work as a nurse, I administer blood transfusions for patients. There are so many seemingly little rules and regulations about blood transfusions that I can't begin to deal with all of them, but there are some that become metaphors in helping me understand Precious Blood spirituality and my journey as an Adorer of the Blood of Christ.

I have come to believe that Jesus is a universal donor. My guess is he has O+ type blood.

In giving blood, there are certain standards and procedures the lab has to follow. One is that the recipient's hemoglobin has to be less than 8.0 grams. Aren't we always anemic from sin, fear, grieving, pain, guilt, anger, hurt? No wonder we wish to receive the Blood of Christ every day.

There has to be a written order from the doctor to type and crossmatch the patient for enough units of blood to cure the anemia. Recall the prescription from the Divine Physician: "I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you will not have life within you." (John 6:53)

After the recipient is typed and crossmatched, he or she is tagged with a special bracelet. When we make profession as Adorers, we receive a heart and chain to wear.

The number on the bracelet is the same as the number on the unit of blood that has been prepared for the patient. The nurse has certain procedures she must follow in giving a transfusion. Blood can be infused only through a certain caliber needle, and this needle has to be in place in the patient's vein before the blood can be retrieved from the lab. Blood has to be started within fifteen minutes after it has been removed from the refrigerator. Only the nurse can get the blood from the lab, and one of the triplicate forms from the typing and crossmatching of the patient's and the donor's blood. The nurse checks the patient's number on the bracelet and writes it on the form. She

then goes to the lab and asks for the specific unit of blood. The lab technician and the nurse verify all of the information on the unit of blood with the information on the triplicate form. Both sign their names and the time. "What I have written, I have written." (John 19:22)

The nurse carefully takes the blood to the nursing unit and again information on the forms is checked and verified. Both nurses must sign and date the forms as well as note the time the blood is hung to be infused. What preparations do I make to receive the Blood of Christ?

For the first fifteen minutes of the blood transfusion the nurse stays with the patient and watches for any reactions, records blood pressure, temperature, pulse, and respirations every five minutes. A reaction to the blood would be seen if the vital signs changed drastically from those checked before the transfusion. There also may be a reaction manifested by itching or hives. Do I have any kind of reaction when I receive the Blood of Jesus? Can I name it? Is it life producing?

I mention to patients during those fifteen minutes of intense nursing care to be grateful and to pray for the person who donated this unit of blood. He or she took the time from a busy day to spend the better part of an hour answering a lot of questions, feeling pain of being stuck twice, once to check the iron level of the blood and finally when the blood is given. Some donors even endure the embarrassment of fainting when they give a unit of blood.

Jesus was wounded by the scourging, crowning with thorns, being nailed to the Cross, and having his side pierced so that all could be transfused with His Blood. What is my reaction? How am I grateful?

Hopefully the patient will not have any reactions as the nurse continues to check the vital signs every thirty minutes and finally when the transfusion is completed. The transfusion must be completed within four hours or the remainder of the blood has to be discarded. How often do I encounter difficult situations during the day and invoke the power of the Precious Blood? How often do I experience joy or a special experience of God and gratefully acknowledge the power of the Precious Blood in my life?

Did you ever donate blood? When you are finished, you are treated with beautiful hospitality and seated at a table of refreshments and given instructions to eat well and drink plenty of fluids for the next few days. Then they place this oval-shaped sticker on your shirt: "Be good to me. I gave blood today." I always put mine on my crucifix when I get home. Jesus gives His Blood in so many ways everyday. How am I living the power of His Blood each day?

(Sr. Mary Maurice Loepker, A.S.C., "The Metaphor: Giving the Gift of Life," *The New Wine Press*, December 25, 1992)

9. The Cry of the Poor

The blood of the poor stops at our door. The prophet Isaiah says to us today as we spread our hands in prayer and raise our voices in praise: "Your hands are full of blood." Whose blood?

- the blood of men, women, and children martyred in Central America;
- the blood of South African blacks yearning for freedom;
- the blood of the homeless sleeping in the streets of St. Louis;
- the blood of the AIDS victim dying alone because of our fear;
- the blood of the migrant worker who labors for low wages and risks his life because of pesticides that poison his system;
- the blood of the children who seek sanctuary in our hearts and homes;
- the blood of the young mother who cradles her child as she shuffles slowly through the soup kitchen line;
- the blood of the worker locked out of the factory;
- the blood of the farmer exiled from his land, his life.

Their blood is on our hands. Their blood stains our apathy and colors our indifference. Isaiah commands us to wash their blood from our hands, not to remove responsibility in a Pilate-like act of cowardice; but to wash away our inactivity in a Christ-like act of courage: "Cease doing evil, learn to do good...seek justice, correct oppression, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow."

These are the helpless and outcasts; the oppressed and

injured; the neglected and abandoned; the forgotten and unforgiven. These are the ones to whom we are sent. The blood of the poor leaves a trail to our door. Their blood stops here.

Isaiah calls us to conversion...to commitment...to recapture the covenant won for us in the blood of the cross. As women and men banded together under the banner of the Precious Blood, our belief in Easter does not eclipse our memory of Calvary. Our nail-scarred Lord challenges us to rekindle the memory. "Do this in memory of me." We who are redeemed through the blood of Christ, are charged with the responsibility to remember; to reconcile those members of the Body of Christ who have been forgotten. "In Christ Jesus," Paul says, "we who were once far off have been brought near through the blood of Christ." By embracing this responsibility, we forge a new genesis; a new creation; a new beginning of hope for our time.

To be a follower of Christ today means to be poor. Jesus identified himself with the outcast. His mission statement becomes our mission: "to bring glad tidings to the poor...liberty to captives...recovery of sight to the blind...release to prisoners." To announce to all those who fear they have fallen out of favor with the government, or with the church, or with society, to announce to them "a year of favor from the Lord."

A few years ago, I listened as a missionary from Nicaragua told a group of us of the murder of some of his parishioners by the Contra forces using guns and ammunition "made in the U.S.A." He echoed a familiar refrain but one that has particular relevance for us. "Hearing the Gospel has a lot to do with feet," he said, "it depends on where you stand. If you stand in the mud with the poor or if you stand on the plush carpets with the rich."

The oppressed, the marginalized, the outcasts have pulled us—sometimes kicking and screaming—from the plush carpets and spacious halls to stand with them in the mud and blood that soaks their feet. We make a difference in bringing the light of the Gospel and the leaven of God's reign upon our world when we stand with the poor. When we live in solidarity with those who are oppressed. When we huddle with the masses that endure injustice.

Ours must be a ministry of compassion. But to paraphrase

Henri Nouwen, we cannot bring glad tidings to the poor if we are not willing to confront those who cause poverty; we cannot bring liberty to the captives if we are not willing to confront those who carry the keys; we cannot profess solidarity with those who are oppressed when we are not willing to confront the oppressor. True compassion leads to confrontation.

The force of our faith gives birth to this quality of compassion because we believe in a God who suffers with us. The basis for our hope is found in Paul's words to the Ephesians: "Christ is our Peace; Christ has broken down the barriers of hostility that kept us apart."

We are challenged today to become a "dwelling place for God." And we learn how to be that dwelling place from listening to the poor. God's face is seen so clearly today in the eyes of that frightened child seeking sanctuary; in the face of that tired young mother in the soup kitchen line; in the callused hands of that farmer and factory worker; in the haunting glance of the one who dies alone. They must know that God has not abandoned them; that God still loves them, breathes in them, lives in them. And we must know that God is with us to give us the courage of compassion. To touch their fears and tears with the reality of Calvary and the promise of Easter. After all, we believe God alone can save and lift us free on the wings of resurrection. But as Isaiah warns us, we must act on our belief. As religious men and women, we recapture Isaiah's vision and Jesus' mission of hope by becoming streams of mercy and compassion for victims of injustice.

Indeed, the spirit of the Lord is upon us; we are anointed by God to bring glad tidings to the poor by standing in solidarity with them; not keeping them at arm's length but embracing them with a compassion born of the cross.

- we are sent to bring liberty to captives by unlocking the doors slammed shut by greed with the keys of generosity, charity, and most of all, justice;
- we are sent to bring recovery of sight to those blinded by materialism; those blinded by the notion that every want is a need; those who see only possessions and lose sight of the dignity of the human person;
- we are sent to release those imprisoned by the bottom line

of corporate profits; those who see only statistics and miss the sacredness of the individual; to those whose lives are imprisoned by militarism, we must show the way of peace; to those who see only dollar signs we must point out the signs that lead to the reign of God: meekness, humility, mercy, righteousness; to those whose energies are fueled by revenge, we must model reconciliation.

People who are imprisoned by policies that have no place in the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be freed. The bottom line is not found on a balance sheet but in the Scripture. Wherever dreams are planted and then wither; wherever suffering takes root and pain flourishes; wherever blood soaks the soil of parched lives, God is there. And we, if we are worthy of our name, must be there too.

As we gather around the table of Eucharist, we give witness to the blood that is on our hands. We raise our voices to the God of life. As we do, we bring with us the blood of all who yearn to be free from oppression, injustice, and economic violence. We bring them all — the plea of the orphan, the cry of the widow, the lament of the lost — we bring them all to the table of Jesus.

As we lay them here, along with our lives, sisters and brothers, we see that the blood stops here. The precious blood of the poor stops here at our altar and mingles with the Precious Blood of Christ to break down the barriers that keep us apart. In this remembering, we discover the peace that is Christ; the hope that is God; and the courage that is the Spirit. Though the blood stops here, it also flows from here in our lives poured out in loving service of the poor.

(Fr. Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S., "The Blood of the Poor", Homily for Precious Blood Congress, St. Louis, Missouri, August 2, 1988)

10. The Cry of the Indigenous in Latin America

The history and the reality of the indigenous people who inhabit the Guatemalan State is a history of suffering, of pain, and of death. It is a history marked by agonistic signs of life. They are signs which can be revitalized or extinguished. The reflections which Fr. Robert Schreiter presented in his book In Water and in Blood gives us a blueprint and necessary orienta-

tions for responding with a spirituality of solidarity in a world torn apart by conflict, divisions, and violence. Little by little that spirituality of solidarity and the challenges it presents are giving form to and taking hold in the diverse situations which conform our world, especially in Latin America.

To speak of the spirituality of the Blood as a spirituality of solidarity in countries where "the ethnic minorities" live (John Paul II, January 1989) is becoming relevant. Guatemala and other countries which have indigenous groups constitute "the ethnic majorities" which live in situations of oppression and desert. In Exodus 3, 2-9 God enters into solidarity with his people and comes to meet them because "he has seen their tribulation" in Egypt, and has "heard their cries due to the hardness of their foremen", "and knowing what they are suffering", has come down to liberate them from the hands of the Egyptians; "and to help them go from that land to a good and spacious land, a land of milk and honey". "Summing up, the cry of the sons and daughters of Israel reached" the ears of God; and he "saw their affliction and how they were oppressed".

This see, hear, come down and liberate Israel from the hands of the Egyptians on God's part are concrete facts, acts of solidarity, a way of identifying himself totally with the oppressed, the marginalized, and the poor who are oppressed by a small minority. They are slaves, exploited by a small minority. God takes on their pain and their suffering. God comes into solidarity with them, not in a romantic but in a practical way: Come and see, free my people from Egypt (Exodus 3,10). God becomes incarnate in the people, he becomes the God of the people and Israel, the People of God. He is inculturated because he becomes perceptible, enters into dialogue and is near, and that is way the Covenant reads: "I am your God and you will be my people". If Yahveh is known by his people, it means that God understands them in their cultural context, in their language, in their daily lives, in their suffering, and in their food, because he uses the same cultural codes in order to give of himself and to communicate with the suffering people of Israel in Egypt.

The Inculturation-Incarnation is a central mystery of our faith. God, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, takes on human nature: "The Word became Flesh and dwelt among us" (John

1:14). Jesus of Nazareth, the historical man, with a human genealogy, Son of Mary, is the "One sent by the Father" (John 10:36). He is the Son of Yahveh. From this flows that the intrinsic vocation of the Church is that of being missionary, a vocation which stems from the trinitarian mystery. In Jesus Christ the pedagogy of Inculturation, of Incarnation and of Liberation were concretized. He, without any blame (Heb. 4:15), became a person like us, with human consciousness, a man with subjectivity, spontaneity and historical freedom. The human consistency does not diminish the divine filiation, but rather they grow proportionally and along side one another.

In order to respond with an authentic spirituality of the Blood of solidarity and of hope, to the indigenous peoples and nations who have been destroyed and disfigured, we must come to a spirituality of solidarity configured and determined as INCULTURATION, that is, one which is a clear and firm answer to a culture. Even though the term Inculturation is anthropological, it has been theologized and has become a christian answer of the Church. It is even more so for those men and women who are inspired and are nourished by the Spirituality of the Blood.

Inculturation is presented to us as a means for reaching the indigenous peoples in which the signs of death are more imminent. Inculturation will be the necessary means so that the people, destroyed and faceless, become once again integrated and configured as a people. With inculturation all the possible means and instruments at our disposition are put to use. Inculturation is not reduced to the translation of manuals and latin texts into a determined culture. Nor is it a simple adaptation of the truths. Rather, it demands work and multiple and complex studies of the entire culture, with all its religious expressions, as well as anthropological and linguistic studies. Inculturation refers to a new expression and reformulation of the faith in the molds of another culture. It is a task and a praxis, rather than a body of doctrines. It penetrates all the aspects of the christian message and of the human realities. It is a pluralistic and polyfaceted process which is realized indistinctly in the womb of the cultures. Inculturation is a process by which the gospel message is inserted in a culture, penetrat-

ing and transforming it from within. It is a process by which the christian message is inserted progressively in a culture starting from the underpinnings of that very culture. Inculturation is the sowing of the seed of the Gospel in a culture and at the same time the discovering and the germination of the Seeds of the Gospel already present in a given culture, that is to say, the latin-christian elements, so that in this way the faith can germinate, develop itself and express itself according to its own species, and to its own cultural identity; that is, according to its cosmic vision.

Our C.P.P.S. presence among the indigenous peoples of Guatemala wishes to be an answer to our spirituality of the Blood, a spirituality which is in solidarity with and which wishes to be inculturated, to become incarnated and inserted.

(Dario Caal, C.P.P.S. "The Spirituality of the Blood: A Challenge for Inculturation", Fifth Workshop of Precious Blood Spirituality, pp. 27-28, Santiago, Chile, January 1990)

THE CALL OF THE BLOOD: BEING MISSIONARY

11. A Missionary Heart

Enduring the catechumenate process in jail is a real lesson in what "spirituality" means. Often that word misleads us. Jesus guides us into a spirituality that does not take us away to ethereal mysteries in some outer space. It is not concerned primarily with sacred rites held in sacred times and places. Nor does it evolve around special prayers and formulas.

Jesus, rather, leads us to find the holy in all of those spots in society where human life is diminished to pay the debt, and well-being is sacrificed daily for the survival of "respectable society." As a matter of fact, this is just how Jesus got himself into so much trouble.

While it is true that Jesus never landed in jail as did John the Baptizer, he did experience arrest, false accusations, torture, and finally legal death by capital punishment. Still in those agonizing final hours of his life he identified forever with all who are judged and condemned. In those final hours he died in the manner that he lived, suffering "outside the gate, to sanctify the people by his own blood (Heb. 13:12)."

He had initiated his missionary career in a symbolic baptism in water which signaled to him the real baptism that was to come. For Jesus, initiation into the mysteries of the reign of God meant letting go of the deceptive securities of the city and its laws and customs. It meant making that journey down to the river to get into the line-up of repentant sinners.

It is in the river, in that humiliating posture of the repentant sinner that he hears the confirmation, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased (Mt. 3:17)." Throughout his ministry Jesus would struggle with the slowness of his disciples to understand this fuller meaning of his baptism: that he would be a rejected messiah who would allow himself to be immersed in that relentless river of the world's judgment.

An important part of the catechumenal process is discerning our commitment to community building. When we say that "here we have no lasting city" we don't mean that we are waiting passively for pie in the sky. Rather it means that the reign of God is not to be confused with the present city often built on deceit and on the backs of the poor.

Our initiation into the mysteries of God's reign involves an option for the poor, the commitment to work together with them—the stone rejected—meant to become the cornerstone of a new society. "God chose the world's low born and despised, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who were something (1 Cor. 1: 26-28)."

We are being initiated into a new way of seeing the institutions and reality around us. This journey of faith means leaving securities and going "to him outside the camp, bearing the insult he bore (Heb. 13:13)."

Of course Baptism and Confirmation only mark the beginning. It is initiation into a life in which the eucharistic breaking of Word and Bread and sharing the Cup brings us time and again to commit ourselves once more to this covenant with God's poor.

A Precious Blood spirituality stubbornly insists on seeing the world from the point of view of the outcasts and condemned. We live every Eucharist as provisionally as Jesus did the last supper—ready to be carried off to our baptism. We are reminded of Archbishop Oscar Romero whose last Mass ended abruptly in the shedding of his own blood, for having clearly identified this building up of the "new city" among the poor of El Salvador.

For this reason also we share the bread and cup in fear and trembling. When we remain unconcerned about the plight of the poor, and go even further to hold them without mercy to their debts, what we believe to be Eucharist is only a charade. What kind of validity can Mass have if we are indifferent to the hungry in the world?

What Saint Paul describes locally is just as true on the global scale: "When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk (1 Cor. 11: 20-21)."

In some ways you don't choose your initiation into the prophetic missionary heart. There is a variety of rites today for initiation as associates or members of religious community or even the sacraments of Christian initiation. However, a basic respect for human rights would keep us from prescribing God's idea of a novitiate process for any one of these.

Think of the kind of "novitiate" prepared for Martin Luther King or Nelson Mandela, for Paul of Tarsus, Dorothy Day, or Gaspar del Bufalo. In each of these cases, it meant prison. Somehow their initiation into spirituality drew them first into that sacred space of the condemned. Each suffered a particular "baptism" which initiated a prophetic mission among the poor and the oppressed. Through such initiation a missionary heart was born.

We would do well often to bring to mind these flesh and blood profiles to understand the missionary heart. Today when we think of a profile, we tend to think of an abstract list of positive characteristics. Such documents suggest a state of perfection marked only by positive qualities. We need to look also at the darker sides of those very human hearts of our founding mothers and fathers. Often we're left with sanitized versions of the lives of our saints, so different from the accounts of sacred scripture.

How boldly the Bible portrays the dramatic transformation of David's adulterous and murderous heart into the favored partner in God's covenant. Or that God would entrust the sacred command "Thou shalt not kill" to Moses, one who had struggled with the reasons in his own heart for the passionate murder of the Egyptian slave manager.

We need to take courage from the words Jesus dropped into Simon Peter's complex missionary heart, so full of fear and denial: "Simon, Simon! Remember that Satan has asked for you, to sift you all like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may never fail. You in turn must strengthen your brothers (Lk. 22:31-32)."

Every word and gesture of the risen Lord as captured in the fourth gospel reconfirms the truth that forgiveness is forever linked intimately with mission (Jn. 20:19-23). Certainly under normal circumstances the apostles would have expected incrim-

ination from the Lord for having abandoned and even denied him. Fear reigned in their hearts. Can we imagine another likely scene? A former friend, hurt and betrayed, holding wounded hands in his face crying: "You'll pay for this!" The cycle of debt and injury would continue.

But what happens? The gesture is the same, but in place of the accusing words they may have expected, they receive words of reconciliation: "Peace be with you!" Then he renews the mission in a most forceful way: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." He breathes on them and continues, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

(Fr. Thomas Hemm, C.P.P.S., "Shaping the Heart of the Missionary," *The Wine Cellar*, October 1995, pp. 27-38)

12. Entering the Winepress

As heralds and ambassadors, we must remember that "the message has the authority, not the herald of the message." In this light, we can no longer hold ourselves up in hierarchical positions. As heralds and ambassadors, we must become priests and poets of the Word. How often Gaspar eloquently quotes the Song of Songs, "The blossoming vine gives forth its fragrance (Songs 2:13)," in speaking of the preaching of the members and its fruitful attractiveness.

As members of this missionary community we must become lovers of stories that invite people into the presence of the divine lover. We must listen among our people for these stories, tell them to one another over and over again, and enable others to find this story in their lives. Stories of reconciliation, the forgiveness of sins, where we know of the presence of Jesus, among all the nations, cultures, marginalized, and poor with whom we work.

In the Song of Songs, the invitation is into the fields. It is a way of speaking in the bible about becoming a new creation. This new creation that Jesus has already become, he assures us in the resurrection appearances, is incarnational and relational. He shows us flesh and bones. We know that Jesus is one like us. We are to be flesh and bones in our world, not spiritual and detached.

Gaspar in his second letter also invites us to return to our roots to keep our vision clear. He writes, "The apostolic life is based upon the interior life of the spirit." As heralds and proclaimers, just as the message is not our own, so too, the power is not our own. It is from the spirit. In Luke's gospel, Mary hears the very same words of incarnation and relation that the apostles and church hear at the end of the gospel. We are to be "clothed with power from on high."

Out in the fields, we are invited into the wine cellar. Gaspar calls the heart of Jesus the mystical wine cellar or banqueting hall. Here we are intimate with Jesus and one another in the spiritual center of the Precious Blood.

It is just this community that raises our anxieties. Too much closeness frightens us. We have this idea that we have to live up to an image of a "big family." We have the phony picture of the American family as the Quayles, in their JC Penny clothing fanned out across a perfectly manicured lawn. In this vision of family there are secrets, denials, fear, a host of dysfunctional responses, and unrealistic expectations.

Real community is just the opposite. In the wine cellar of our intimacy in the heart of Jesus, we can experience together and deal with our pains, wounds, sufferings, and the times we ourselves have reconciliation. This step must happen first before we can assume to work with others and proclaim the message of reconciliation, or we have no authentic message to proclaim. In this real family, we are small communities and networks of members and companions. We are what the rabbis called "mashehu," a "trace of something." In our real community, we take Luke seriously when he describes the apostles as coming together in understanding what they saw and experienced in their reunion with the risen Lord. Consensus and collaboration are the qualities of this new community.

While we are in the wine cellar, in the mystical heart of Jesus, we also see the wine press.

Someone said recently that the Precious Blood does not make for a popular spirituality. The psalmist cries, "You have allowed your people to suffer, to drink a wine that stupefies us" (Psalm 60:3). Yet we cannot avoid the blood issues of our time. We must be a community that reads the signs of our times.

These are the stories we tell.

Thus, we are confronted with the wine press. In his book, *In Water and Blood*, Fr. Schreiter writes about this symbol as the Old Testament symbol of God's anger and wrath, judgment and discernment.

In our time we have become anesthetized in the media by blood and violence, so that we can pretend to comfortably eat our TV dinners through the evening news. Now is the time for us, invited into the community of the Precious Blood, to recover and discover this powerful symbol, indeed, no longer as a symbol, but as a reality that "stupefies us." Here we confront the passion of God. This is what makes our God passionate. God shows us real love. God fixes us with a look in the wine cellar that we cannot forget. It awakens us. It startles us. The anger and wrath of God touches a deep part of our human psyche and soul. God has a strange way of loving us. Here we share in the passion of our God. We can no longer sit still in the comfortableness of our spiritual lives. Here we understand the need to take risks that can lead even to the shedding of our own blood. The sisters in Liberia certainly understood this. And as well our missionaries in Latin America.

Our anger motivates us. The sight of crushing grapes mystically evokes the sight of blood and this evokes our passion, what we are to do. This is a deliberate memory of the passion of Jesus stirring up our anger to do something about the injustice in our time, the shedding of blood in our world, the issues where life itself is at stake.

Before we can share in the mystical wine of God's love that gives us courage, we must see the wine press. We must know of our own woundedness. We must know that we too are the ones in need of reconciliation. We must know of our own return home to the Lord, to the mystical wine cellar. We must know that reconciliation, our proclamation and our passion, "brings before people the action by which God takes people up again into fellowship with God. Not only do we desire God, but that God desires us."

The sufi poet Rumi uses this line to startle us: "I gaze at the unripe grape and taste the wine." He knowingly makes us understand that there can in fact be no short cuts past the wine

press, around the passion, away from the mystical blood. Our own sufferings and pressing out must come before we share in the wine, which Gaspar writes in his fifth letter, "renews and fortifies our hearts." Only in devotional and pietistic imagination could we dare to cheat this process.

Attention to blood is the work of reconciliation, which gives us identity through our experience of the passion of Jesus. It is something discovered in our stories, not a process or a goal, as God brings about a new creation between us as victims and aggressors. This is the ministry and mission given to us. This is at the core of our identity.

My sisters and brothers, in light of this invitation of Jesus, we must raise our expectations or die. We must raise our expectations or sell ourselves short on the gifts we say we have. We must raise our expectations and celebrate the moments of reconciliation, healing, wounds and sufferings. This is word and proclamation that gathers us here. We must be engaged in the invitation of our times to renew ourselves and others with this mystical wine. We must be clear about who we are or cease to exist."

(Fr. Alan Hartway, C.P.P.S., "The Wine Cellar: This Mystical Place on our Journey is the Spiritual Center of the Precious Blood," *The New Wine Press*, May 25, 1993.)

13. The Poor are Calling Us

We are called to be faithful to our charism and to the spirit of our founders, while responding to the signs and needs of the times in which we live. Put another way, we are called to BE where GOD wants us to be. Our challenge is to follow Jesus and to be obedient to his call in changing historical and cultural contexts. As people who bear the name of the Precious Blood we are being called by the Blood of Jesus. Can we let ourselves be led by the poor, by the hungry and the outcasts of society? We are called to make visible God's presence among them. Fear, shame and blame can immobilize us. We take refuge in the unknown, in our establish world.

Yet, as missionary communities we are called to live as a pilgrim people, to travel light, to always have the mental disposition of "letting go" and to travel on whenever God calls us or

whenever the signs of the times beckon a response from us. The Blood of Jesus calls us to witness to his presence, to be living arks, reminding the outcasts and the downtrodden that God's love is unfailing and that they are never alone. God journeys with them. Our Pilgrim God wishes to be with the suffering, with those pushed out to the fringes of society and with those whose lives are threatened showing his love and concern to them, through our missionary presence. We walk with the people to show them that their pilgrimage isn't just a wandering without a destiny, but a road which others have already walked. We will be a Sign for them. We are members of the new alliance, sealed in the Blood of the Lamb!

We are called to be Good Samaritans in our world today, becoming brothers and sisters to those in need, leaving when called our established and known worlds, our routines, our plans, sometimes our own cultures of origin, in order to be led to where the Blood is calling us to be.

St. Gaspar is a model for us in this important aspect of missionary spirituality. He let go of his long-time desire to become a Jesuit and a foreign missionary like his patron, St. Francis Xavier. He overcame his poor health, his love for cleanliness, in order to make long and tiring journeys. He left his beloved Rome and all his apostolic activities there in order to crisscross up and down the Papal States, searching out the despised and the needy of his times. He lived the mystique of "exodus." A mystique which never let him become installed in his dear and cherished Giano. He was a true missionary and our model.

To be a missionary today demands of us to be ever ready to hear the voice of the Blood, calling us to a journey of solidarity and of compassion, thus recovering our missionary charism.

(Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S., *Along the Road Marked by Blood*, C.P.P.S. Resource Book # 9, The Messenger Press, Carthagenia, Ohio, 1992, pp. 11-17)

PROFILE OF THE MISSIONARY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

This Profile is seen within the context of the spirit of our Founder, St. Gaspar, our CPPS Patrimony, the Normative

Texts, and the General Formation Program.

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The BLOOD OF CHRIST is at the center of the life and ministry of the Missionary. This sign of God's love gives definition (description, clarification) to the missionaries' understanding of

- God's reign
- to whom we are called and sent
- the message and word we proclaim
- how we are present with God's people
- what motivates within our spirit
- how we share life and mission in the Bond of Charity

The missionary finds at the center of his vocation the BLOOD OF CHRIST. This expression of God's love calls him

- to the alienated, the poor, the disempowered: those yet to be included in the new Covenant
- to the victims of oppression and violence and to their oppressors
- to stand in solidarity with all those who suffer
- to those who experience inner conflict and a sense of unworthiness
- to be prophetic: to resist deceit, injustice and whatever is contrary to God's reign
- to affirm peoples in their dignity and worth
- to witness to evangelical hope
- to struggle for the coming of the Kingdom

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Being a **MISSIONARY** characterizes his attitude and movement in ministry. Being a **MISSIONARY** calls him

- to read the signs of the times and have a desire to be sent
- to be evangelized by the living Word of God present in the people and in the values of the culture to whom he is sent

(he listens respectfully before he speaks) and by the Revealed Word of God in Jesus Christ

- to evangelize
 - in the proclamation of the Word
 - in witnessing by life-style
 - in promoting peace and justice
 - in defending human rights and dignity
- to allow God's Word to transform the patterns of human living
- to appreciate other models of church and to create other ways of being in community
- to collaborative ministry with laity
- to a celibate loving that enables a radical response to wherever and whomever the Blood calls us.

In attending to this missionary endeavor the missionary carries within himself an attitude of

- interior freedom and poverty of spirit
- mobility and flexibility
- openness and availability

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We are **CONGREGATION**. We embrace community life which supports our mission. The Congregation values and respects the individual gifts and talents of the missionary and in turn invites the missionary to contribute those gifts and talents to the mission of the Congregation.

This community life is characterized by

- living together, as long as the needs of the apostolate do not demand otherwise
- a humility which recognizes our inter-dependence
- a spirit of dialogue wherein the missionaries agree upon a community project. This community project includes shared prayer, shared ministry, shared recreation, shared meals and any other particular goals that respond to the needs of the missionaries.

The missionaries are accountable and responsible for this project and any other decisions made in common.

Our commitment to one another is a **BOND OF CHARITY**. In this Bond of Charity, the missionaries can be themselves, risk failure, and trust in one another's mercy and forgiveness. In this Bond there is

- a sharing of strengths and weaknesses in a spirit of mutual trust
- an affirmation of each other
- a spirit of on-going reconciliation
- a spirit of on-going conversion
- a spirit of hospitality
- a support and encouragement for each other as the Blood calls us to be in mission to new and unfamiliar places.

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This Congregation of Missionaries of the Blood of Christ often gathers at the Eucharistic Table. It is at this table that our Bond of Charity is celebrated, where we are healed and strengthened for mission and where the Cup of the Covenant creates communion and calls us to places where we would rather not go.

(C.P.P.S. Formators' Workshop, July, 1992)

LIVING THE EUCHARIST

14. The Many-Sided Eucharist

Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment..." (Jn. 13, 34). Most of us tend to interpret this in its Scriptural context as referring to love one another, and rightly so. Additionally, Jesus gave us (at least) two other startlingly new commandments: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk. 22, 19b) and "...you also ought to wash one another's feet (Jn. 13,14)." These latter two references, of course, have a Lord's Supper context. The new Christian commandment, really, is threefold: love, eat and drink, and serve. And it is in celebrating and living Eucharist that these three new commandments most profoundly and clearly intersect as one: to be Body of Christ, to do and be as Jesus.

Four traditional paradigms have shaped our understanding and approach to the celebration of Eucharist over the past twenty centuries: Eucharist is covenant, memorial, sacrifice, and meal. These can serve as a springboard for searching out an alternative paradigm that may more adequately encompass the challenges of today's world and our own contemporary insights into our Precious Blood spirituality.

To speak of Eucharist as covenant stretches us to embrace our Christian identity as the Body living out the gift of God's largess. Eucharist is God's unprecedented gift of Self to us so that we might in turn gift ourselves to others.

By eating and drinking together we all share in the same heavenly food, all partake in the divine refreshment of life, and all are more perfectly transformed into the divine identity of being the Body of Christ. Eucharist as meal invites an openness and transparency of self such that we all recognize our common identity and destiny. To gather around the table of the Lord is to hospitably proclaim Christ's victory over death until he comes in glory.

To remember is a communal activity that enables the spirit of a person or the meaning of a past historical event to be present...When Christians "do this in memory of me," they participate in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ; that is, they enter into the life, death, resurrection, and ascension/pentecost event of Jesus. Eucharist, therefore, is our entry into those historical realities, not as a "going back" but as a making present. Eucharist is a making present of the Jesus event. Eucharist as memorial necessarily takes us beyond the ritual action and into participation in the very life and ministry of Jesus in the here and now.

Eucharist as sacrifice has a unique twist to it, for Christ is both the one sacrificed and the one who offers. Further, our baptismal identity with Christ suggests that we, too, are both victim and priest; that we, too, are called to surrender for the sake of the common good. Eucharist costs. Oh, but what a gain! The sacrifice of self in union with Jesus' death on the cross is the assurance of a share in the divine life of the resurrection.

The proclamation of the Gospel is a prophetic utterance; we are challenged by the "Good News" to take up Jesus' life and ministry, even to the point of taking up the cross and dying. The paradox of the Gospel makes apparent what our baptismal commitment is all about: there can be no life without death.

The paradox of the Eucharistic Prayer also makes apparent what our baptismal commitment is all about: death has lost its sting because resurrection has overcome it.

In the paschal mystery, death and resurrection hold each other in a creating tension (dialectic). In Eucharist, too, death and resurrection hold each other in creating tension: The Liturgy of the Word prophetically challenges us to take up the cross and live the Gospel, even to the point of death; the Liturgy of the Eucharist joyfully invites us to share in the resurrection by standing at the messianic table. This is Eucharist's alternative paradigm. Eucharist as creating tension holds together in a dynamic integrity the whole mystery of salvation; by dying we rise to eternal life. Covenant, meal, memorial, and sacrifice are all gathered into the single paradigm of a death/resurrection dialectic...Celebrating Eucharist is our entry into the creating tension of the death/resurrection mystery of Christ, whereby we

become more a perfect manifestation of his Body, the Church.

This death/resurrection creating tension or dialectic is hardly limited to Eucharist's ritual celebration. In fact, the dynamic of the eucharistic ritual parallels the dynamic of Christian living. This is to say that the reality of Eucharist is not limited to its ritual celebration (Mass), but it extends into and defines our Christian living. In other words, Eucharist cannot be understood merely in terms of "going to Mass." It cannot be relegated to a specific time and space, but rather cuts across all time and space and is received as the reality of God's overture of love to us that is so powerful and dynamic that it is really and truly the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ given and received. Eucharist itself is the paradigm or model of Christian living. To be Christian is to live eucharistically; that is, to die and rise. Eucharistic action transforms us ever more perfectly into the Body of Christ. This is our Christian identity; this is who we are. Living Eucharist is to be the Body broken and Blood poured out for others.

Practically speaking, this means that before there can be a truly fruitful eating and drinking the Body and Blood, there must be a concomitant embrace of the prophetic Word. Unless the Word is a lived reality in our everyday lives, we eat and drink to our own condemnation (1 Cor. 11, 17-34). The creating tension between Word and Body and Blood is the dialectic between the prophetic and messianic realities of our salvation. Redemption consists in living (dying) and then living anew (rising). Living Eucharist means that there will be formidable demands on us: our wills must be surrendered to God's will; our living must change to reflect more perfectly the life that Jesus lived; our ministry must be a response to the Christ within the other we meet, whether that other is rich or poor, healthy or diseased, associate or outcast, free or imprisoned, woman or man, saint or sinner.

Living Eucharist means realizing the Gospel in our everyday lives, with all the evangelical demands and contradictions. For it is by identifying with the Jesus of the Gospels that we, first, manifest the reality of the Body which we become by sharing in the eucharistic food and, second, that we make a difference in the world. In this context it is patently inconceivable

that eucharistic living is anything but just living. Righteousness and just actions are a fruit and measure of eucharistic living.

Just as Eucharist must be understood broader than an "unbloody sacrifice of the cross," so must Precious Blood spirituality be understood in terms broader than Jesus' shedding of his Precious Blood, as rich and implicit an image as that may be. Indeed, Precious Blood spirituality is really just another paradigm for Eucharist. They have parallel internal dynamics: Eucharist is the creating tension between Word and Food, between prophetic and messianic, between dying and rising, between losing and embracing, between doing and being, between covenantal meal and sacrificial memorial. The Precious Blood marks a creating tension between violently spilled and lovingly poured out, between senselessly emptied and willingly filled, between ignoble death and eternal life, between the dead wood of the cross and the ever viable tree of life.

Both Eucharist and Precious Blood spirituality have their negative aspect that we humans wish to shun; they also have their positive aspect that we humans wish to encompass without also embracing that dying. But this cannot be. The only way to life is through death.

Precious Blood spirituality calls us to liminal ("on the edge") living. This is no poetic reflection, but a clear statement of a challenging way to live. Make no mistake about it: this is hardly a call to make dramatic changes in one's life. There is more at stake than a shaking "conversion experience" that is really no more than the seed planted in sand and the shoot soon withers. The creating tension of Precious Blood spirituality (and Eucharist) makes much greater and lasting demands on us: it demands that in whatever state in life or ministry we presently find ourselves, we always choose to do perfectly God's will, just as Jesus did. Only in doing God's will is God's reign present. Only in doing God's will is a peaceful and just humanity reborn. Only in doing God's will does the seed of God's prophetic Word take root in good soil, and grow in a healthy shoot that feeds and nourishes.

Christ's new commandment is to love one another. But lest

we turn these words into innocuous fluff that we can ignore, Jesus also gave us the commandments to share a meal and wash other's feet. Love, true Christian love, is always played out between surrendering ourselves to being filled by God and spending ourselves in emptying service. Being filled and being emptied are the only ways to enter into the depths that Eucharist offers. They are also the only ways to enter into living and authentic Precious Blood spirituality. They are the only ways to love as God has first loved us. This is our gift. This is our identity. This is our hope. This is our challenge.

(Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S., "A New Commandment: Eucharist as Loving, Eating and Drinking, and Serving", The Wine Cellar, February 1995, pp. 5-14)

15. He Eats and Drinks with Sinners

Although many titles and descriptions for Jesus are rich, true, and lend themselves to meaning, within the context of that table and our Eucharist, none more breaks open a new covenant like the Christological title, Blasphemer. The blasphemy becomes undeniably stark and painfully difficult to avoid when that cup is offered and our bodies and blood mingle with and become quite indistinguishable from the body and blood of God. No other perception or title jars, surprises, offends and awakens us as does this title, Blasphemer. No other title might highlight and clarify the mission of this man. No other title more aptly indicates Jesus' understanding of who we are as a people who raise the cup, drink the cup, and offer it to one another. We can begin to understand what indeed makes this new covenant uniquely new.

Jesus addressed this perception and label early on in his life. The raising of this cup is but a culmination, and the drinking a consummation of his shocking and unsettling union of sacred and profane throughout his life and at the many tables prior to the last. He is perceived as being friendly toward the profane and powerless. He stands and walks among those war-ranting separation and walls, barriers, distance, and the garbage dump dwelling places.

Rather than assume a rescuing posture at those tables and in those dwellings, he instead reclines, drinks, eats, and

appears to raise up a blasphemous cup of blessing in those places and with those people where barriers and clear boundaries were thought to be legal, right, justified, and holy.

At these tables he clearly blasphemes by inviting friendship and intimacy with the unclean and unlikely. This blasphemy is characterized not only by an exaggerated, excessive, and extreme perception of his own goodness and godliness but the startling and dangerous conviction that others were likewise formed and created. Friends and leaders of the law wondered whether Jesus was not muddying the waters of the holy and the human. Since uniting the holy and the human was blasphemy, his contemporaries began to conclude that Jesus suffered from an apparent distortion of vision: a seeing of godliness where that godliness is thought to be most absent. Is it not a mingling of holy and human that the old covenants are viewed as divided by enmity, opposites, at war with one another? Was Jesus proposing to render this old way obsolete? Blasphemy in the life of Jesus was about bridging clean and unclean, first and last, the least and the greatest.

The charge at his trial, then, is not surprising, but rather a consistent consequence of a life of faulty, muddied vision: a life of seeing God in all things and most poignantly in places where God could not possibly be. The sentence and place of execution befits the crime: blasphemous blood and life could not be spilled in view of upright persons and on sacred streets of the "holy city". Better to mock him and execute him surrounded by those he proclaimed were so holy, so godly; who were surrounded by garbage and separated by the gate and wall.

Yet, powerfully blasphemous images and words are etched on our memories. Blood that is shed in disgrace and humiliation rips the temple curtain of separation and cries for unimaginable inclusion of those kept afar. The blood of Jesus is faithfully blasphemous. He utters one last blasphemy in painting a picture of paradise and naked union with God to a fellow criminal sharing that garbage dump dwelling of death.

Was the joy at that final table about Jesus being able to be in communion with the godly image of who we are? Was he in communion calling that to our awareness? Approaching the table, our "Amen" is nothing short of an unwavering and stub-

born belief in the fundamental godliness of all human life.

Our hands are not empty approaching this table. They hold out a life that is abundant, colored by contradictions and alternations. Yet, we are in the very image of the One who breathed into this body that we hold out for communion. Our "Amen" is a firm "Yes" to the inheritance that has been promised and given to all those who have been freed from slavery and drawn to a new friendship and partnership with God. Leaving the table, we know we have been reminded once again of who we are, blasphemous though it might be.

The body and blood of Christ is reminding us of the union that has made our own body and blood indistinguishable from God's. A crucial moment at that table is when the blood birthed a new covenant characterized by friendship rather than servitude. A cup of blessing is joyfully and confidently raised and shared proclaiming a conviction that indeed life is the stronger over the death dealing temptations of self hatred and the violence it breeds.

It is just such honest conversation with the One who blasphemed in calling us friends that the mystery of faith is affirmed and we choose to believe again that our blood is precious as is the blood of all that lives.

The last words we hear, "Do this in memory of me," haunt us. We know that this phrase has been minimally reduced to a consecration mandate given to future priests. Yet further contemplation broadens the vision. The entire evening is to be reclaimed. Friends are to "do" what Jesus did: the intimacy with brokenness, the union, the washing of feet, the belief in our creation, claiming again a birthright image. We are sent forth and commissioned to be body and blood that it is no less blasphemous than the one who first longed to close the gap and to unite with that which we had been told was separate.

So this new family, this new covenant, is nothing less than a household of friends courageously uttering blasphemies in the face of the world that call into question and sometime cynical doubt, the Good News: all that was once considered afar, distant, outside has, by blasphemous blood, been brought near. In consuming that blood of Christ, we consummate a union longed for by God and us.

Leaving that table, empowered by the memory of the blood of Jesus, our body and blood will experience a compelling attraction to be blasphemous. We find ourselves seeking out the distant and the disadvantaged of our day and our tables will become bigger than when we first entered the room.

We will discover among us a growing tendency to be easily spontaneous, and often offended by exclusion, rank, dualism, and the ungodly distancing of human and divine, his blood and ours. We will find this thought and behavior in ourselves, our church, and our world to be distasteful, wrong, and sometimes enraging, all of which will loosen our tongues, curing that which is mute.

Some might observe us as being lopsided, lax, or loose. We might well be accused of overemphasizing the fundamental goodness of ALL blood and life. There might well even be moments of ridicule and mockery as we admit that we don't know how a new household of God would look were all people treated as though they were gods.

Without little doubt, we will also experience the charge and the trial of the first blasphemer. We might also be forced from the mainstream finding ourselves outside the gates for having led the people astray. Being newly displaced and perhaps finding ourselves, maybe for the first time, to be strangers and aliens in this new place, it might take us aback as those who have always lived there provide us with a table, some of their bread and a cup to be raised up and shared. In that moment we might know for the first time what it is to "go to him, then, outside the gates and bear his humiliation, sharing in his degradation" with an odd and surprising peace and joy."

(Fr. Greg Comella, C.P.P.S. "Body and Blood as Blasphemy", The New Wine Cellar, February 1995, pp. 16-23)

16. The Living Chalice and Living the Eucharist

Although the chalice is one of the most important instruments used in celebrating the Eucharist, it is still an instrument. In an emergency it can even be dispensed with. Yet the chalice is so close to the Blood of Christ that it assumes a marvelously symbolic strength all its own that can guide us to a deeper understanding of our lives relative to the 'Price of Our

Redemption'. In all three major parts of the Eucharistic Celebration (Preparation of Gifts, Eucharistic Prayer, and Communion) the chalice serves the Blood of Christ in such an immediate and varied manner that it itself becomes a sign teaching us how to shape our lives in the service of redemption...

To be a "living chalice" means that we continue our service to the Blood of Christ. Whenever we are filled and directed by God's word, whenever we transform our lives by God's power and keep offering them as gifts to God, our gifts will also become gifts to others. The greatest gift that the world is yearning for, consciously or unconsciously, is peace, harmony amidst diversity, and unity. It is only in unity that we are free to discover the happiness for which we were created. What people long for, then, is redemption. But there is no redemption without the Blood of Christ.

If you desire, therefore, to be a chalice that contains and dispenses the Blood of the Redeemer, then continue to live the Eucharist. Neglect no opportunity of collecting wine in your heart, drop by drop, moment by moment. Do not be concerned whether the wine be sweet or dry. What matters is the transformation, the sacrifice, the presence of the redemptive Blood of Christ.

Stand at the foot of the Cross with Mary, ready to lose everything. Let not a single drop of the Precious Blood trickle from his side that does not find a place in your heart and is not offered up with trusting love to the Father!

It is not required that you change the world. What is left in the chalice remains bitter or sweet even after the wine becomes the Blood of Christ. The world does not have to have all its problems solved in order to be saved. What the world needs is Redemption.

Therefore, celebrate the Eucharist by living it. Be a living chalice, but do not talk about it. Mary at the foot of the Cross did not talk either. It suffices that you be present with a trusting faith wherever Christ is bleeding on the Cross for humankind. Be there with loving heart as Jesus' mother is.

Whenever you receive the Blood of Jesus, whenever you remain steadfast in adoring it, whenever you endure pain in

silence but extend love to others, then will people beat a path to your door. For they will perceive Mary's presence in you, the presence of a mother.

People are searching for God. They are yearning for God's love. Keep on receiving this love in the Blood at the foot of the Cross. Keep the pain to yourself but grant the light won thereby to others until they in turn discover its source and also learn to appreciate and love the Cross.

Be a living chalice by being Mary. Be a continuous Communion, a "Font of Mercy". Then you will be bringing redemption to others and you will be establishing unity, because all the while you will be giving them God, who is Love itself."

(Winfried Wermter, *CPPS, Blut Christi-Kaufpreis unserer Erlösung*, Leutesdorf: Johannes-Verlag, 1983, in *Cincinnati Province Newsletter*, 1985, pp. 20-23)

I am like most mothers. I believe God has given us a very special bond with our children. The umbilical cord is cut at birth, but we are always attached, connected by that special relationship that is a gift from God.

As a mother, I can relate to Jesus as he stood on the hill overlooking Jerusalem and cried, "O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem." So often I have wanted to gather God's children together as a mother bird collects her young under her wings. So often I have wanted to bring a mother's care to God's broken children, to tend their hurts, to care for them, to love them. But as Jesus had to let go, so do I. Recently, one of my sons said, "Mom, I have to make my own mistakes."

The Precious Blood is life — life in me, life in the children of God, life in those suffering in oppressed countries who live with the knowledge that today, or someday soon, they will be shedding their blood. Most of us are not called to shed our blood literally. But if we want to be true followers of Christ, we die daily in our own paths of suffering, mostly by our self-denial.

When I drink from the Cup, I say with my life, "I am opening myself to you, Christ, and by this act I am willing to suffer with you. I will walk this life with you, knowing that my life will be splashed with the shared suffering and pain of those who walk near me."

Yes, my life is poured out daily for my husband, my children, my family. Mistakes allow us to dip into the Blood of Christ and forgive and hope and believe.

Our youngest daughter is deaf. She is also diabetic. We moved to Sedalia so our daughter could attend school here. I became aware of so many children with disabilities. Many of them have only one parent. My husband and I have been through some tough times over the years but "for better or for worse" tell the story of our life together. We support each other. He is my mentor, the one I depend on, the one who listens to me when I am discouraged, as well as the one who laughs with me. Our children give us many happy times and many times of concern. When I am worried what my daughter will do in the years to come, my husband reminds me that we will deal with it when the time comes. I accept the challenge of preparing her for life. I pray that when I am discouraged I won't give up. I am not alone. I have my husband, my family. And there are many moms and dads that daily carry the cross of life who walk the road of shared suffering with Christ.

The Blood of Christ calls me to be patient as I believe in God's healing and promise of redemption.

I recall the film we saw for the provincial assembly called, "Survival Run." Our survival run means that sometimes we have hills too steep to climb. We realize that coming down the hill seems easier and yet there are those rocks in the way that could trip us. We try to accept the hardships even as we watch for those rocks in the way. This is the only way I know how to get to the finish line everyday.

Being a Companion means I am willing to be involved in the real world which has more than its share of pain and suffering. We are often called to cry with those who are running alone. As we seek a closer union with the Blood of Christ, we are willing to deal with those issues that make us angry and those experiences in life which inflict pain and impose disappointment.

In the Precious Blood of Christ, I am united with God. I know that God is with me on the run to Calvary. As I accept God's redeeming presence even in the pain and sorrow of my life, resurrection becomes a reality.

Joan Ginther, "A Mother's Love Reflects the Pain and

Promise of the Precious Blood," The New Wine Press, September 25, 1992, p. 159)

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

17. Peace Makers at the Foot of the Cross

We, the women and men of the blood, stand at the foot of that cross where Jesus still bleeds; wars in our streets, wars in our neighbor's yards, wars around the world.

The many needs of reconciliation in our world urge us to carry the blood of the crucified Christ in cups filled at the foot of the Cross. Bonded in charity and bathed in the blood of Christ, we point to Jesus crouched and waiting in the corners of our excess.

The time has come to go again and again into the world needing God's reconciling love. Christ's blood in the chalices of our lives spills as a drink of justice for those excluded because of gender, because of social position, for those who love differently, and for those who live in ways which make us uncomfortable. There's both a poverty of goods and a poverty of belonging for those on the edge.

We are the action and activity of the blood. As we tend the cup, we pray, "Lord God, may this cup pass me by."

It doesn't.

Drinking from the cup of our experience we know the absence of our love for one another, the hurts that we have stuffed into the pockets of our pain, the broken strings of promises unkept. We have harbored resentments for too long. But God assures us that we are up to the task of reconciliation.

To stand at the foot of the cross is to see God's blood spilled carelessly in the carnage of the world. Bloody wars of greed and all acts of violence deny God's existence and presence in the other. Victimization reveals itself as painful stories of God's absence in our world's violent way of being. Silent and sticky to the touch, wasted blood dries quickly to strain permanently the boundaries that separate people from people: prejudice, bigotry, sexism, homophobia, name-calling, discrimination.

From the foot of the Cross the silent screams of the voiceless become deafening. We can see into the camps from which today's victims of crucifixion are expelled in denial of equality, victims of death-dealing discrimination. We see too clearly the familiar and sanctioned violence of greed of those who have power. Violent cries of injustice are visible in the pleading eyes of hungry children. Child victims of war memorialize a national sin that we cannot, and should not, deny.

As prophets and missionaries of the blood, we wrap ourselves in a spirituality of reconciliation. This stains how we view ourselves and those with whom we are broken. We are women and men of reconciliation. We look into the living rooms of our lives to know our own sins of injustice. There is injustice when a fair wage is not paid. There is injustice when people are denied voice. There is injustice in violence of any name. The reconciling blood of the cup of the covenant spills to give voice, protesting oppression and victimization.

As our world decreases in size, we look beyond the borders of our nation to know God's inclusive call, especially with those with whom we do not agree. The cup filled at the foot of the cross spills as compassion and reminds us to seek virtue rather than orthodoxy.

Because the blood of God's Son is shed for everyone, the cup of the new covenant carries us to strangers. We are anxious to meet strangers to know them as friends. That is the work of reconciliation. The blood sends us as missionaries into the camps of those kept outside the gates of respectability. It is not enough to feed the poor. The blood of reconciliation asks us to know their names. More than praying for the sick and dying, we must hold their hands. We have too often denied problems ignoring them with our silence. God's blood sends us as prophets and missionaries to point to Jesus who is the way.

The crucified Jesus is the bridge to a new world, to a new creation, the gate between heaven and earth. As prophets and missionaries, we point to Jesus where reconciliation flows from the cross. We look outside ourselves, outside the gates, and across the bridge to Christ to a new world, a world colored with reconciliation. Having put our ears to the cracks in the walls of our social structures, we have heard God's voice in the cries and

whimpers of the lonely, the victimized, the outcast, the oppressed. We will be healed only in the carrying of the cross of commitment of God's justice and hope.

We carry and offer the cup to remind the world of what it can be, what it must be to be the creation of God. We spill ourselves into a new world, a world intended by God to be a world of reconciliation.

When we gather at the foot of the cross to fill containers with the blood of Jesus, why would we imagine that we would go anywhere but where the self-righteous will say we ought not go?

(Fr. Jack McClure, C.P.P.S., "With Chalice in Hand, We Stand at the Foot of the Cross", *The New Wine Press*, March 25, 1995)

The adoration of the blood of Christ ought to encourage the person to be a peace-maker: to construct peace. Nicholas Cabasilas, the expert in Byzantine liturgy, a great spiritual person, in his work, "The Life of Christ", has written:

Peace is so precious that God came into the world to buy it for humanity: he who is rich and Lord of all things, did not find anything else worthy of such goodness, *but he paid for it by pouring out his blood*. In fact among all things that had come into being, he did not find anything else to be of greater value than that of peace and reconciliation, a peace and reconciliation that he searched for, and of which he made a new creation, i.e.: *his own blood*. And hardly having poured it out, he immediately became a reconciler and prince of peace. Therefore to conduct well their own lives the adorers of that blood should not attribute any greater duty than that of being builders of reconciliation and of peace among humanity.

The adorers of the blood of Christ ought necessarily to be builders of reconciliation and peace among human beings. Reconciliation and peace in small and large communities, in the Province, in the Congregation. To think of being a reconciler and artisan of peace only for those they encounter outside the community, while inside there exists division, brokenness,

disharmony, and conflicts, is a contradiction and a counter-witness.

This work of peace is made easy by the fact that the blood of Christ is a new creation and that the blood is the only precious value proportionate to that of peace. An authentic adoration of the blood of Christ leads one necessarily to build peace, because thanks to the blood of Jesus, one brings about the bonding between the person and other human beings.

(D. Romano Altobelli, C.P.P.S., "The Adorers of the Blood of Christ as Peace-Builders")

18. Reconciliation in Perú

I want to focus on the opportunity to develop more thoroughly a Precious Blood spirituality as a ministry of reconciliation and peace.

We are called to meditate constantly on the truth that in Christ's Blood a reconciling peace is indeed possible, even against all odds. We recall that in Gaspar himself and in his missionaries we find just such an extraordinary conviction that allowed him to move courageously among rival factions. I am sure that his mere presence in trust among the terrorists spoke as much of his spirituality as did the explicit message he was there to communicate.

I don't think there's need here to tell the kind of horror stories that are told again and again, fruit of the escalating immorality of a situation of war or civil strife. Within the area of Ayacucho (Perú) some five thousand lives have been taken over the past five years. But not only is innocent blood being shed, but it is desecrated in atrocities which are calculated to inculcate terror both in the adversary and in the local civilian population. It is just this kind of situation that cries out for Precious Blood spirituality.

I have mentioned in this context that we revive and adapt the method of mission developed by St. Gaspar and his first missionaries. First of all, when you meditate on the predicament of groups or population centers caught in the vortex of escalating violence, family after family experiencing in their own members torture, murder and permanent hostility, when you consider how communications media are manipulated to

create an atmosphere of hopeless resignation — in this kind of situation the effectiveness of an extraordinary, non-violent campaign of reconciliation becomes evident. If St. Gaspar's missionary ventures were known as "spiritual earthquakes", I'd like to think in terms of a sort of "spiritual guerrilla warfare."

In his apostolic exhortation on "Reconciliation and Penance," Pope John Paul describes many dimensions of a contemporary ministry of reconciliation. For our purposes I'd like to focus on one mentioned: dialog. Perhaps those of us who have lived in Chile recently have become believers in the importance of reconciliation and mediation in the public realm. Chile and Argentina were dangerously close to war about seven or eight years ago. Thanks to a patient and persevering mediation of the Holy See a bloody confrontation was avoided and, to date, we enjoy a delicately balanced peace.

Now if our spirituality is projected apostolically in a ministry of reconciliation, this will mean that we have it together in our own Community life. Someone remarked in our discussion group: "Nobody gives what he doesn't have!" If we, indeed, are called to such a ministry of reconciliation to those around us, or perhaps even in very critical areas of conflict, can we truthfully say that we are becoming within our own ranks "experts" in dialog? Within our own C.P.P.S. Community are we capable of forgiving "seventy times seven" so that it not happen, as Saint Gaspar so often warned, that after having "preached to others I myself should be rejected."

At still another level, aware of the need for reconciliation within the larger Church community, I'd like to ask if some of you have also had the experience of our Community's being a kind of factor of reconciliation within the local Church. I often wonder if the fact that we are such a small — if you will, insignificant — community, allows us to interact positively among different religious communities and with local diocesan clergy, facilitating reconciliation and cooperation.

There is yet another dimension of our spirituality that is crucial in the kind of situation I've been referring to in Ayacucho. The key biblical image here is that of the Suffering Servant from the prophecy of Isaiah (53: 1-3). As the prophet exclaimed: "Who would believe it?" Yet we have been witness

again to the truth that a full spirituality of suffering and death, of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation not only manages to salvage a bare minimum of humanity in those crucial situations of human suffering, but surprisingly become a source of hope for new humanity for all. When we overcome the temptation to escape from the life-death reality of suffering, we are enabled to discover the full meaning of our humanity. This is true as well in the social dimension. Father Nephtali Liceta, who ministers to the families of disappeared persons in the area of Ayacucho, claims that "our people is the suffering servant of the Lord." Perhaps where one would least expect to find it, among people who have experienced unspeakable horror, arises forgiveness and hope for a new social order.

But again, the kind of orientation and meaning given to human suffering is extremely important. As mentioned earlier, the intense energy released in suffering is so often harnessed into programs of hatred and class warfare by means of a kind of ersatz "blood spirituality." This leads to an interesting thought: Perhaps the self-same reasoning which led Abimael Guzman, founder of "Sendero Luminoso" (Shining Path), to conduct his Maoist inspired revolutionary experiment in the Ayacucho area would suggest that it is likewise ripe for an active Precious Blood spirituality. Guzman recognized the immense capacity of the Andean people for suffering and resistance to cold, hunger and fatigue. These same conditions that favor a violent revolution would favor a non-violent one once redeemed in a Precious Blood spirituality, strong and serene in the face of suffering and conflict.

I hesitate to make the following reference because of sparse opportunity at this time to give it thorough justification. Yet, I'd like to get the suggestion into discussion, namely: the importance of an active Precious Blood spirituality in the practice of liberation theology. It is obviously a very sensitive issue both in the area of social conflict as well as conflict within the Church community. I believe that in the issue of liberation theology there is often a deadlock in the domain of the abstract. A Precious Blood spirituality breaks the deadlock in drawing us personally into commitment with a suffering, struggling people. At the same time it keeps in focus the power of reconciling and

non-violent struggle against the temptation of violent class struggle. But again here I only offer the suggestion, recognizing the need for courageous experimentation in this area.

However you look at it, I believe, bloodshed raises up multiple fighters to a cause. So often the youth of Latin America are introduced into giving up comfort, home and even their own life's blood to the cause of vengeance and violence. I believe we have an important role to play in raising up fighters willing to give their blood for the cause of Jesus.

The accepting of these new challenges by some should mean renewal for all of us in our spiritual life. Each of us wherever we are, in dying to self and bearing our share of community and apostolic love, are building up a genuine Precious Blood spirituality. If, indeed, some seem to be called into apparently more challenging circumstances, their response is only as strong as the rest of the members, each contributing his share to the life of the body. A missionary attempting to respond to a particularly trying situation is no stronger nor more faithful than the priest or brother struggling patiently with illness in St. Charles Infirmary, or another member struggling with alcoholism or other personal weakness and sin.

(Fr. Thomas Hemm, C.P.P.S., "Latin American Perspectives on Precious Blood Spirituality," Cincinnati C.P.P.S. Newsletter, 1985, pp. 1664-1671)

1. True reconciliation comes only — with the help of God — from the perspective of the victims and their families. Powers of the state, which have been the protagonists of violence, can not be instruments of reconciliation. No one can pardon himself for the shedding of blood. Victims have the right of "blood vengeance," but not the law of talion vengeance of an eye for an eye, for we Christians believe that only in Christ through the power of Blood are the victims slowly going to receive the grace to pardon the murderers of their relatives and friends.

2. For this reason, when St. Paul asks us to be "ministers of reconciliation," he asks us to show solidarity with the victims. No one is able to speak in the name of the victims until he has suffered in his own flesh what the victims have suffered. Therefore the Church (or any other body) can be an instrument

of reconciliation only when it has been authentically identified with the victims, as has the Chilean Church during the military dictatorship, as has the Polish Church under the communist dictatorship.

Today in Perú we are still very far from a true national reconciliation. There are those who wish to "cover over spilled blood," but the blood still cries out for "vengeance". There are those who speak of reconciliation, but "multiply words as do the pagans" without genuine solidarity with the victims.

Simply put, reconciliation does not come cheap. It will cost all of us Peruvians to initiate an authentic process of national reconciliation.

(Fr. Ernest Ranly, C.P.P.S., "Blood Cries Out: National Reconciliation," in the Peruvian Newspaper, *La Republica*, July 14, 1995)

19. Between Covenant and Cross

"What does a spirituality of the blood look like when viewed through the experience of reconciliation? To go back to the Scripture passages cited earlier from Colossians and Ephesians, God has reconciled the world through Christ, making peace through the blood of the cross. It is in Christ that God offers us reconciliation. It is a reconciliation inscribed on Jesus' own body. He experienced abandonment by the Twelve, he was tortured and cruelly executed. Yet in the vision of Luke he experiences God's presence, his Father's presence, and calls upon his Father to forgive, and then commends his spirit to his Father. The reconciliation that Christ offers to us, as the peace of God, Jesus gives us through his own experience. In asking God to forgive and engaging in an act of trust, we find Jesus himself within the circle of reconciliation. The tender heart of grief, disappointed and abused, becomes, in John's version of the story, the source of new life: water and blood, baptism and eucharist.

The peace who Christ is for us comes through the blood of the cross, Colossians tells us. That blood carries two profound meanings that open up the view for us upon our spirituality. First, it is the blood of suffering. Through the suffering of Jesus, who knew no sin, the enormity of all the evil in the world

is taken up. Thus the pain we undergo in betrayal and abuse is taken utterly seriously by God. It is not forgotten. But it is transformed. Again, the body of Jesus, in John's account, bears witness to that. The risen Jesus appears to the disciples utterly transformed, but the wounds of his torture are still there. They are not discounted or glossed over. But they become for Thomas a source of life, of faith in Jesus. They are no longer just wounds.

Which brings us to the second meaning the reconciling blood offers our spirituality. It is the blood of new life, the new creation. As a symbol of the very life of God within us, of the shalom of God, it both points to and nourishes the vision of a reconciled humanity. Best envisioned in the cup of blessing it praises God and looks to the fulfillment of all things in Christ, when all will be reconciled in and through him (Ephesians 1, 17-20; II Cor. 5,17).

In Precious Blood spirituality, reconciliation marks out the space between the covenant and the cross, between the center of our lives and its margins. A spirituality of the covenant emphasizes themes of belonging: God has made us a special people through Christ's blood. Covenant is about commitment, about care, about hospitality. It creates a life-giving center where people are valued and celebrated. It is a true sanctuary in our lives: a holy place and a place of refuge.

A spirituality of the cross begins "outside the gates," in the garbage dump where only the marginalized, those who do not belong are found. The cross marks the place of their suffering and their exclusion. A spirituality of the cross is a spirituality of solidarity and witness: solidarity with the victims and witness to the injustice that is being perpetrated. It is a spirituality of waiting and attending to those who suffer.

The twofold meaning of the reconciling blood as the blood of suffering and the blood of the new creation give shape to a spirituality of reconciliation. We have seen how God's reconciling activity takes place in, first, the life of the victim, and then the life of the evildoer. But what is a ministry of reconciliation? What is it for those of us who may not have suffered deep harm in our lives, yet know God's love?

Not everyone has been wounded so deeply as to have the full

experience of reconciliation described above. But Paul's point in his writing is that, in sin, we have all undergone it. The experience of God's loving and gracious presence in our lives is an epiphany of that reconciling grace. We all share in that through baptism. We live it out in spiritualities of the covenant, the cross and the cup. But what does a spirituality of reconciliation bring to all of this? And how is this ministry carried out?

It must be remembered that it is God who brings about reconciliation, we only assist in it. To that end, in the same passage from Second Corinthians, Paul calls those who exercise the ministry of reconciliation "ambassadors" on behalf of Christ. Our ministry, then, must be a witness to what God is working toward in and through the world.

The ministry of reconciliation takes place in the space between covenant and cross, between the sanctuary and the desolate place outside the gates. It is found on that pathway from sanctuary to cross, the Way of the Cross, the Via Dolorosa, the path of sorrow.

There are so many people in our world that are being driven along sorrow's pathway, bearing the burdens of their humiliation and anguish. Ministers of reconciliation, like the women disciples in the passion story, accompany those so burdened, realizing that they cannot lift away their sorrow. But like those women, they can be with them all the way, offering small comforts, sharing their grief. And once outside the gates, the victims are not abandoned.

Similarly, if we, as ministers of reconciliation, go the entire way in solidarity and care like the women who did not abandon Jesus, we also know the way back to the sanctuary, to the center. We can accompany those who have suffered on their journey back to the center. By having stayed with the victims in their time of desolation, we can be part of their finding their sanctuaries.

What does such accompaniment mean concretely? While we cannot bring about reconciliation ourselves, we can help create the conditions that make it possible. Along that Way of the Cross we can create stations of listening and care. Part of the healing process for many victims is repeating over and over the story of what has happened to them. It is as though that is the

only way to break the grip of the lie on their lives. Their story must be repeated over and over until it can be told a different way. By listening, we help create the conditions for experiencing trust and, in turn, trusting once again.

Another way of engaging in this ministry is creating communities of covenant where belonging and trust are visible and celebrated. Victims welcomed into such communities get a glimpse of the reconciliation that awaits them.

Struggles for justice are part of this ministry. To acknowledge the wrongdoing done and to lament it, like the women along that first Way of the Cross, is to recognize the enormity of what has been done, and not let it be twisted into a lie that presents itself as the truth.

The ways of the Cross in our world are many. They run not just from Jerusalem to Calvary, but through the streets of our cities and towns. They run through our very homes. As ministers of reconciliation under the sign of the blood of Christ, we move between covenant and cross, between the place of the sanctuary and the desolate place outside the gates. Without the cross, the sense of belonging in the sanctuary can wither to a mere coziness. The vision of reconciliation, and the ministry along that way to the cross and back into the city, grows out of a deep conviction that God is reconciling the world, even though it is apparent that there is still so much deeply wrong with it. Those who were far off can be brought near. Those who have been deeply alienated from themselves and others once close to them can regain the most precious elements of their humanity that have been taken from them. There is a new creation, flowing from the wounded side of Christ (John 19:34).

(Fr. Robert J. Schreiter, C.P.P.S., "Between Covenant and Cross", The Wine Cellar, October 1994, pp. 11-15)

THE ANGUISHED HEART: SUFFERING

20. The Wounds We Carry, the Seeds that Grow

Jesus took the risk to invite James, John, and Peter into the garden to pray with him. He invited them to enter into his brokenness, his anguish, his pain, his confusion, his fear. The fact that they fell asleep takes nothing away from the invitation. Remember, it was night. The darkness which surrounded them reflected the night that was within them. But their drowsiness does not detract from their initial willingness to enter the garden with Jesus. They were tired. It was late. They fell asleep. Let us not be too hard on them. Who of us has not fallen asleep now and then when we have been invited to pray, to stay awake, to watch and wait? Our spirit is willing but our bodies are tired.

We remember that these same three were invited by Jesus to go to the mountain with him where they witnessed the transfiguration. Then it was easy to stay awake. Something exciting was happening right before their eyes. There was Jesus and Moses and Elijah all meeting together on the mountain. It was a glorious moment—one that these three wanted to savor and keep. Then they wanted time to stand still. They wanted to pitch some tents and camp out on the mountain of glory.

But now they found themselves in the garden of sorrow. It is easier to sleep when all hope seems gone. In this garden grew plants of pain; flowers of anguish. There were no clouds of glory or brilliant lights. No neon signs to keep them awake. No stunning displays of dazzling divinity. Here they found the heart of humanity. The sacred heart. The broken heart.

When pain becomes more than one can bear, the advice is: get some rest, you'll feel better in the morning.

What is so human and so holy about this invitation to the garden of Gethsemane is that Jesus wanted his closest friends to share his brokenness, his sorrow, his pain. He invited them into the deepest cavern of his character. Just as on the mountain he invited them to catch a glimpse of his glory, now in the

garden he wanted them to sneak a peek at his pain.

When another invites us into the chamber of sorrow, we will never escape without being changed. When we welcome another into our garden of pain, we say, "My heart is filled with sorrow to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake" (Mark 14:34). We don't expect her to say any words that will comfort us or recite any message of condolence. We only desire that she stay with us, remain with us, remind us that we are not alone.

When we take the risk to respond to the invitation of another to enter her garden, we tread softly, gently. We know words have no meaning here. Only love and presence speak with tenderness here.

A good friend who has suffered deeply and experienced great losses in her life, now makes it a point to go to those who are grieving in her parish after the death of a loved one. She is motivated to do so by her own sense of loss and grief. Recently, she told me that when someone says to her, "I wish I could go and offer my sympathy," she replies, "How can you not go?" This woman has been to the garden herself and she knows the pain. Even more, she knows how important it is for someone else to share the pain. That is why her ministry of grief-sharing has become second nature to her.

There will be many moments on our pilgrim's path when we will be invited into another's garden. Tonight, Jesus takes us into Gethsemane to learn a little more about grief, about prayer, about love. Jesus invites us to pray not from a heart that sings but from one that screams.

In the garden, Jesus invites us to love not in the winning but in the losing. And when we learn a little bit more about this quality of love, we will be able to invite others into our garden when the pain is impossible to bear alone. We will learn how healing can only come from a heart that has been broken.

(Fr. Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S., *Passionate Pilgrims*, C.P.P.S. Resource Series, # 13, The Messenger Press, Carthagen, Ohio, 1993, pp. 71-73)

Spirituality is learned in living experience. For people bathed in the blood of Christ, our spirituality is found first in our own experiences of suffering. In our wounds, we learn the

tender compassion of our God. In the inventory of our own wounds, we find the call to live the spirituality of the Precious Blood.

Many events along the way have shaped my personal response to the spirituality of the blood of Christ. Certainly the most telling was my brother's suicide in June of 1987. A few weeks after Ed's funeral, I left parish work and went to Italy for a meeting of formation directors from our congregation. Because the memory of Ed's death was so fresh in my mind and the grief so present in my heart and soul, as I walked on the path of St. Gaspar's life during those weeks — Rome, Giano, Sonnino — the spirituality came alive. It found a home in my broken heart. I could no longer keep it at arm's length. Here were the seeds of suffering. Here were the seeds of liberation.

Gaspar's devotion to the Precious Blood deepened for him when he spent years in prison and in exile for refusing to compromise his beliefs when Napoleon occupied Rome. In his own experiences of suffering and exile, Gaspar's compassion deepened and the formation of a religious congregation named for the Blood of Christ was conceived. He knew that the fire in his belly was his passion for the Precious Blood.

But Gaspar knew he could not live this passion alone. Like the prophet for whom the Word of God was a burning ember that burned a hole in his soul; no matter how hard he tried to keep the fire inside, he could not. Gaspar knew he had to let it out. So he gave birth to a religious community that would be a dynamic force for spiritual renewal both in the church and in society.

This renewal flowed from the cross in the redeeming stream of Christ's blood. I believe our mission is one of reconciliation and renewal. A mission that is found in our own experience of the paschal mystery. We are to be those wounded servants who carry on the work of the reign of God that Jesus gave to his friends on the night before he died.

We don't do this alone but in the context of a caring, compassionate community. As people who gather "in the company of friends," we accompany one another in this journey toward true and lasting freedom found in the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ.

It is because we know our own pain, our own suffering, our own experiences of sorrow; because we know our own wounds, that we are called to share them with one another. We allow these experiences to motivate us to be with others in their pain, in their suffering, in their sorrow. And in doing so, together, we realize God's gift of redemption.

(Fr. Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S., Passionate Pilgrims, C.P.P.S. Resource Series # 13, The Messenger Press, Carthagena, Ohio, 1993, pp. 5-6)

"Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit" (John 12:24)

There is a similarity between the Cross and the grain which little-by-little gets bent over, until it is buried in the ground, as Christ on the Cross. The inclination of Christ on the Cross, has two meanings: one of reverence before the Father in order to say to Him: 'into Your hands I commend my spirit'; and the other is that of service to all peoples in order to say to us: 'take, eat and drink, this is my Body and my Blood given for you'.

For Christ, the first value in his life is the Father, and then follow his neighbors, and finally Himself. It is for the Father that he accepts suffering, marginalization, derision, solitude...and he says to us: 'one who loves his life, loses it, while the one who hates his life in this world, preserves it to eternal life' (John 12:25). That is why to seek the applause of others, to try to call attention to oneself and to stand out, to always want to be the first, to think that others should do everything as I think it should be done, to forget that others walk along with us, is to lose life. But to seek the success of others, to seek the happiness of others and to live without fear and to think that others also have part of the truth...is to win life.

Sometimes our falling to the earth and dying, as the grain of wheat, only remains on the surface in order to be seen, much as show windows. We must die in silence, without blowing our trumpets, without fireworks and clanging cymbals. The rest must notice our death, not because we publish it, but because they miss us on the pedestal which we made for ourselves and because they notice it by our lives which are happier, less over-

whelmed and less strained...

Christ has given everything that he had for us, and for us he has died, has fallen to the earth and his seed has been watered by his Blood. And what has been born? A new Humanity, saved, redeemed, freed of slavery, a People of Sons and Daughters ready to walk together, forgetting one's own way, in order that between all of us, we might eliminate the obstacles that we constantly find and thus no one gets lost nor remains behind.

To all our members...much happiness and a wish that we might all be "wheat", which in order to give fruit, must fall to the earth."

(P. Paulino Hernández, C.P.P.S. Boletín Provincia Ibérica, Year II, No. 7, July 1989, pp. 1-2)

21. The Cup of Suffering

In talking about the spirituality of the Precious Blood, trying to find new ways of speaking about the Precious Blood, often the comment that we hear or even say ourselves — How does this apply to my own life and ministry today in the Church? What follows is an attempt from one perspective to make sense of this apostolic spirituality of the Precious Blood. Hopefully the following comments and reflections will aid us in arriving at ways in which our lives and ministry are continuing to be shaped by a spirituality of the Precious Blood.

Spirituality is more than a mere motivation to grow in our love of God. It provides the larger sense of identity and direction to this response. This, in turn, shapes the way we pray, the way we minister, and the way that we come to see ourselves as a member of the Society of the Precious Blood. It is in this way that we can, I believe, find that spirituality which is ours in this day and age.

Understanding one's spirituality, or for that matter the common elements of a society's or community's spirituality in this way, helps in articulating our own individual identity, and those common elements which we share or should share as members of this Community founded and dedicated to spreading the merits of the Precious Blood to the hurting, alienated, suffering, oppressed members of the Body of Christ, which we call the

Church.

I try to keep before me this question: "What does this have to do with my ministry and my dealings with people?" In other words, I hope to be very practical about this, offering, hopefully, a spirituality of the Precious Blood that is very applicable to us individually and which can then lead, hopefully, to a practical and renewed understanding of the Precious Blood.

When we stop to think about our ministry, be it in the parish, retreat-renewal, chaplaincies, even at times teaching and support services, how much of it seems to be helping people through various forms of suffering? Be it the suffering of a broken relationship, a death, tragedy or a real sense of loneliness and depression. Suffering affects everyone without exception. If we examine our own lives we are aware that there is much suffering. Look, too, to the suffering that has been ours as a Society throughout the years. The suffering when close fellow members leave the Society, when a fellow member suffers from disease of either a physical or spiritual nature.

The response to suffering in our culture seems to be avoidance. While no one wishes to suffer, suffering is a part of our lives. Too often our culture has given us ways to anesthetize ourselves — to avoid suffering at all costs. In doing that, as we all know, we miss opportunities for growth on many levels. We are living in a culture that tries to escape suffering on varied levels. How many people have come through our offices who try to escape with drugs, and alcohol or superficial sexual relationships? Suffering most always is viewed as a negative, something to be avoided and not faced honestly.

In a culture where basic values are so often placed on controlling aspects of our lives, it is very difficult to lose that control. But, in a sense, that is what we are invited to do in our sufferings. It means to let go of some of that self-fulfillment and submit ourselves to God's will. Perhaps the most striking image of this is the agony in the garden, where Jesus prays that the cup may be taken away from him — "but not my will, but yours be done."

This image of the cup appears frequently in the scriptures. We have the blessing cup, the cup of salvation, the cup of wrath and the cup of suffering. Certainly for the Society of the

Precious Blood, the cup stands before us as the sign of the life that comes through suffering and death. Father Winfried Wermter in his essay, "Living Chalice", speaks of our need to become living chalices, that is, to continue service to the Blood of Christ, be transformed by God's power and offer our gifts to God which will become gifts to others.

For a spirituality of the Precious Blood the cup of suffering, it seems, must also be a central aspect. This thought is echoed in a recent Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, "Salvifici Doloris — The Christian meaning of Human Suffering," where he says, "And therefore Christ severely reproves Peter when the latter wants to make him abandon the thoughts of suffering and of death on the cross. And when, during his arrest in Jerusalem, the same Peter tries to defend him with the sword, Christ says, 'Put your sword back into its place...But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?' And he also says, 'Shall I not drink of the cup which the Father has given me?' " How often in our own lives are the sentiments of Peter like our own? How often, too, in the lives of the people with whom we minister? The reactions to suffering: avoidance, violence, as Peter wanted, running away from the cup that the Father has given, or not really caring one way or another.

Historically, when we look at the spirituality of the Precious Blood, we find that it has been particularly strong in times of suffering, and among those who continue to suffer. Witness the growth of spirituality and devotion to the Precious Blood in Central and South America. There is even a growing of this devotion in India, certainly a land and a people who are no strangers to suffering. If we would even look in our own country, we could find some elements of this as well. Witness the devotion that was prevalent during the great depression, and even the great numbers of vocations that came from this time. Of course, there were and are probably other variables that enter into this, but I think the point is worth some reflection on our part.

If this is true, how then can a spirituality of the Precious Blood once again become a source of identity and give direction to a culture that so often goes to extremes to avoid, anesthetize, and be apathetic in the face of suffering? One of the most basic

ways is to acknowledge the redemptive aspects of suffering in our lives, to be willing to take the cup of suffering to drink and to be transformed by it.

It is precisely through Christ's shedding of Blood — the sacred gift of life which comes from God, and is now given back to God — that suffering can be and is redemptive. We through our sacrifice and sufferings can share in the redemptive power of that Precious Blood and invite others to do the same.

While we realize that we will never do away with suffering as long as we are human beings, our suffering can have meaning, can be redemptive, can be life-giving and can help us grow in many ways. The power of that perfect sacrifice can change apathetic hearts into compassionate hearts. The power of the Precious Blood can change the fear of suffering into an ability to suffer with another — compassion. It is the power to see and give life to the hurting, suffering members of the Body of Christ.

How can a spirituality of the Precious Blood take shape in my life and ministry? I think it is in the language of sacrifice that we are able to do this. All of us, by virtue of our baptism have been consecrated, or set apart from merely the other things of the world. By this and by our continuing faith we believe it is possible to transcend our limits and the limits of the world. When we consecrate something, we set it apart from the profane and merely secular to the realm of the holy. After consecration an object or person is part of something greater than itself. A very similar idea, we see, to the concept of sacrifice.

In life and ministry we often see examples of this. How often have we visited persons confined to their homes, suffering from various physical ailments, to find them only about to make sense of this by their offering it up as Jesus did, feeling that they too share in the sufferings of Christ. There is a feeling that they too are now able to share in the redemptive act of Christ, and in their suffering there is life.

(Fr. Timothy McFarland, C.P.P.S., "Precious Blood Spirituality from a Parish Perspective," Cincinnati C.P.P.S. Newsletter, July 2, 1985)

22. Outside the Gates

The Day of Atonement was the holiest day in the Jewish

Calendar. On that day, and that day only, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, the heart of the sanctuary, where the presence of God was most keenly present in our world. There the high priest made an offering of blood to atone for the sins committed by the people during the past year.

The sanctuary was placed in the middle of the camp. The camp of the Israelites in the desert (and later, the city of Jerusalem) represented a place of safety in a hostile desert environment. Here God had gathered a special people, established a covenant with them that made them into 'somebodies', rather than 'nobodies'. To be inside the camp was to belong to God, to have value in the eyes of God and in the eyes of others gathered there into community.

Outside the camp or the city was the wilderness. It was a dangerous place because, in the ancient Mediterranean world if you didn't belong somewhere you were a no-body, considered less than human. To kill a no-body was not considered an act of murder, since only those who belonged were somebodies. To be outside the gate, then, was to be in a zone of desolation.

The text goes on to say that the bodies of the sacrificial animals were burned outside the camp. This image would have been immediately recognized by the first readers of the Letter to Hebrews. Outside the camp was the garbage dump where the refuse of the community was pitched and burned. To that place was taken those things that were no longer of use to the community inside the camp. Just as the dumps and 'land fills' on the peripheries of our towns and cities today, this place outside the camp stood for the very opposite of the organized and civilized life within the camp: inside was order, security, belonging, intimacy; outside was chaos, danger, alienation, and loss.

The image of the garbage dump would have had further poignancy for first century readers because crucifixions were often held in garbage dumps. The Romans reserved crucifixion as a punishment for rabble rousers and those who threatened the public order that Rome imposed on its captive states. It was intended as an excruciatingly painful and ignominious way to die. Death usually took several days and came about by asphyxiation: the weight of the body pressed against the victim's diaphragm, making it difficult to breathe. After several

days, the victim would be too weak to do this, and so would slowly suffocate. That is why in John 19:31 the legs of the victims were broken to hasten their death. Jesus, already weakened by the abuse and torture he had undergone, had already died when the soldiers came around to dispatch the others.

Crucifixion was not only a painful way to die; it was also deliberately intended to be a shameful death as well. Victims were typically crucified naked, to shame their bodies. Such exposure was intended to be the exact opposite of dignity and intimacy. And frequently the crucifixion was carried out in the garbage dump, to emphasize that those condemned to this kind of death were nothing but human garbage, the dregs of the earth. Typically, after death on the cross, the bodies were taken down and thrown into the garbage. They were not even accorded a decent burial. Throwing the body into the dump was the final act of indignity. It is not unlike the horrible images from our own century, when innocent people have been herded into pits and ditches to be shot like animals, or the bodies of the 'disappeared' in Latin America appearing alongside roads.

It is against this background that we read the startling words in (Hebrews 13) verses 12 and 13: 'Therefore, Jesus suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the reproach he bore.'

Suddenly, the Day of Atonement, the most intimate communication between God and humanity, is not taking place in a carefully prepared and guarded sanctuary that is entered only once a year. Now that consecration of the people, the most intimate connection with God, is taking place in the windswept, foul-smelling expanse of the garbage dump. Indeed, according to any human reckoning, there is no intimacy here at all — only a degradation and a shame for all to seek and to mock. What is happening here?

The stark statement in the Letter to the Hebrews points to a profound reversal of how we ordinarily understand the world to be. It was driven home to me a number of years ago. A promising young theologian whom I had advised on his doctoral dissertation abandoned his promising career as a voice for his people in the Philippines to go to work on Smokey Mountain,

the garbage dump on the outskirts of Manila. It is indeed a mountain of waste, garbage, and human refuse. Like garbage dumps everywhere, the rotting of organic waste creates a methane gas that periodically combusts, creating fires and a thick acrid smoke that hangs over the site. Hence the nickname, 'Smokey Mountain', the home to about twenty thousand residents of Manila. They built their homes from the scraps of wood, tin, and cardboard that had been dumped there. They scavenged for thrown-away food and any items that might be resold.

This young priest had committed himself to work among the inhabitants of Smokey Mountain. When I asked him what kept him going in such a demanding ministry, he said simply, 'Christ was crucified outside the gates. Here is where we must come to meet him'.

These words brought alive for me the meaning of this passage from Hebrews like nothing else ever could. What Hebrews is telling us here is that God has chosen to dwell most intimately in the very place where there seems no possibility of belonging and intimacy. In the place of the carefully arranged sanctuary, we now see a cross. John's Gospel plays upon the double meaning given the cross here, of both instrument of shame and execution, and throne of glory. In John 12:32 Jesus engages in a play on the meaning of words: 'And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself'. The 'lifted up' means both being lifted on to the cross to die (in this sense, it might be understood as being 'strung up' or 'lynched'), and ascending the throne of glory.

To see the cross as the place that God has chosen to dwell represents a reversal of most of our values. The all-powerful God now says that true power can only be found in the helplessness and the shame of the victim on the cross. In a space that offers no privacy or intimacy God can be most intensely experienced. In all that counts as the cast-offs of our society, there God is gathering a new chosen people. At the foot of the cross, those new chosen people are consecrated in Christ's blood.

And as Hebrews reminds us, we cannot peer out toward the cross from the safe confines of the camp. To experience the liv-

ing God, we must go out of the gate, to meet Christ in the reproach that he suffers on the cross.

(Fr. Robert J. Schreiter, C.P.P.S., "Outside the Gates", *The Wine Cellar*, February 1994, pp. 6-9)

CONFLICT AND WITNESS

23. Celebrating the Eucharist in Bosnia

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood of the Teutonic Province decided in the spring of 1988 to establish a mission in Bosnia. We went there to the southeastern "edge" of Free Europe, to the "suture" between the Western-Roman and the Eastern-Byzantine cultural zones, to the "trenches" where Latin and Orthodox Christianity had for centuries contended with each other, to the Balkan peoples who for seven centuries had been entangled in bloody wars and upon whose backs the powerful governments of the West, South and East, especially in this century, had carried out their vendettas with each other.

The Serbian and Croatian peoples had come from the East and settled in the Balkans in the seventh century, at which time they began to become Christian. For five hundred years the greater part of this territory was under Turkish rule, when many Christians became Muslim.

In all this confusion, the Catholic Church was a source of strength and safety for the people of Bosnia and Croatia. There were only brief periods of peace. The Church was almost always a bleeding church, and remains so to this day.

We had gone to Bosnia purposely to be near Jesus in his Way of the Cross. We wanted to gather up the blood, his Precious Blood shed in his brothers and sisters, and offer it up to the heavenly Father, so that it might be fruitful for the Church, its persecutors, and for all humanity. We had gone there purposely to find God and to discover his infinite love.

And so I went to the Catholic people in the Balkans. I knew one thing about them for sure: for centuries they had yearned for freedom; for centuries they had suffered violence and bled; for centuries they had remained true to their Christian faith and to the Bishop of Rome. In my heart I carried along the charism of St. Gaspar, the liberating message of the Blood of Christ.

In Nova Topola the Bishop put a tumble-down house at our disposal, of which two rooms were more or less inhabitable. This was the parish house. About three hundred Catholics of Croatian, Polish and German ethnic backgrounds belonged to the parish. About eighty-five percent of the population of this area were Orthodox Serbs or Muslim Bosnians. A church, badly damaged in World War II and in two subsequent earthquakes, stood next to the parish house. Next to the church was a convent of the ASC Sisters, who had been there nearly one hundred years. Nearby was a small construction shed where we moved in for the time being. "We" were a young Bosnian priest, a couple of candidates for the C.P.P.S., and myself.

Toward the end of 1989 a campaign of lies and hatred began which caused anxiety among the people and fanned racial hatred. In the meantime we had established a second C.P.P.S. house in Zagreb, the Croatian capitol. I moved there with four candidates for the Community. In September 1991 the invasion of Croatia had already begun on a broad scale. Hundreds and then thousands of refugees began to pour into the city every day. We were in our still uncompleted house only three weeks when it became filled up to the rafters with refugees from Croatia and Bosnia. The war kept coming closer, as houses, streets, and squares were filled with more and more refugees. Fear and misery increased every day. I experienced the event as an ever tightening death grip around the neck of the nation.

I do not know any more how many people sought refuge in our house. Immeasurable sorrow, shrieks of terror, depression, anxiety attacks, despair. Day and night I talked with individuals hours on end. Everyone had problems all the time. There was hardly ever a night that passed quietly.

As a rule we celebrated the Eucharist together in the house chapel very day. It was a blessed event that transformed our pain and fear into trust and thankfulness. The Word of God often struck us as being so concrete, illuminating our human darkness with divine light. The presence of God in the Eucharist gave us security. People had lost everything, but no one could take God away from them. This "thread" of faith remained unbroken, the stream of the Blood of Christ could not be stopped; no one doubted, not even for a moment, that God

was love. We were all immersed as it were in the cup of the Blood of Christ, and our adoration opened itself out in every word, in every extended hand, in every shared pain, even in the impossibility of easing the pains and despair of the other. It was an uninterrupted adoration, day and night, a constant presence of a dying and loving God which found its expression and explanation in the cup of the Blood of Christ. The Blood of Christ. Continuous pain and continuous divine love. We remained steadfast in our adoration. In all the necessary and multifaceted activities we undertook — humanitarian aid for thousands of refugees, letters to church and political authorities, speeches in Austria, Germany and Switzerland— in all these activities we remained steadfast in our adoration.

I discerned in myself that I had to stay here. I could not walk away from all of this. I could not betray the Blood of Christ. But the burden became too great. After a stay in a hospital in Austria in the summer of 1992, I went to our community in Schellenberg. Soon groups of refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina started coming into Liechtenstein. There were also individual refugees, arriving legally or illegally. In a letter I had written much earlier to the Provincial I said, "A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho...and fell among robbers. We cannot stand idly by and move on." And so a network for dissemination of reliable information came into being, and from that proceeded all kinds of humanitarian aid campaigns.

Here in exile the coming together and reconciliation of members of different ethnic groups who had been enemies at home is often possible. It is a long and thorny way with many setbacks. A broader aspect of the eucharistic cup, of the Blood of Christ, is evident here: reconciliation. Psychically ill people seek healing from experiences of loss, from shock, from deep-seated anxiety, from feelings of hatred, from endless sorrow. And such healing is not possible without reconciliation with the enemy — at least interior reconciliation, even if external reconciliation is often not possible.

One thing I know for sure: God can use us for his liberating activity among other human beings even when we are weak, fallible and sinful. St. Paul writes: "Yet Christ was crucified in weakness, but he lived by the power of God. And we are weak

in him, but we will live with him before your eyes by the power of God" (II Corinthians 3:14).

(Fr. Willi Klein, C.P.P.S., "A New Missionary Challenge", a talk given at the XVI General Assembly, Rome, September, 1995)

24. Remembering the Liberian Martyrs

On November 1, the feast of All Saints, we heard John's familiar vision from the book of Revelation. "Who do you think these are, all dressed in white? And where have they come from?" Our answer that day included these names: Sr. Barbara Ann Muttra, Sr. Mary Joel Kolmer, Sr. Shirley Kolmer, Sr. Kathleen McGuire, Sr. Agnes Mueller. These Adorers of the Blood of Christ, the novices, and countless others who have died in Liberia "are the ones who have survived the great period of trial; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

On the morning of October 31 when I first heard the National Public Radio report saying that five American nuns were murdered in Liberia, I recalled that the ASCs from Ruma had a mission in that country named for freedom. But no more. They are all dead. Now their blood is on our hearts, our minds, our memories, our lives.

Information about the killings was difficult to get that day since presidential politics and polls dominated the headlines. But then I saw Sr. Mildred Gross, ASC, provincial of the Ruma Adorers, at a press conference talking about these martyrs of her community. And Sr. Mary Ann Mueller, ASC, reflecting on her sister's commitment to the poor.

The witness of these sisters of ours and the words of their stunned community members reminded me of those words we pray so often: "Blood of Christ, Courage of Martyrs, Save us." What courage these women showed as they sought to be ministers of reconciliation in a country divided by civil war. They lived the liberation of the blood of Christ and died in love's service.

Blood of martyrs Mary Joel, Shirley, Kathleen, Agnes, and Barbara Ann, remember us. May your blood call us to see there can be no peace without justice. May your blood call us to hear again the cries and sighs of the poor. May your blood call us to

touch the wounds of the oppressed. May your blood call us to taste the bitter sorrow of grieving family and community members so devastated by your loss. May your blood call us to smell the scents of resurrection we believe will blossom from the blood-stained soil of Liberia because of your witness.

Even as we are convinced that you now rest in the peace of God's heart, may your lives of commitment convince us to be compassionate; may your deaths disturb us enough to see how far we have to go to make the reign of justice and peace a reality in our world. May your lives inspire us with courage. May your names live on in our memory so that when we are tempted to give up or give in, your martyrdom will remind us to keep seeking, keep pushing, keep proclaiming the peace found in the blood of the cross.

May all communities who claim for their charism the blood of Christ, resolve to remember October 31 as the feast day of these modern day martyrs. For in the spirit of Maria and Gaspar, these women gave their lives and shed their blood in the name of Christ. Their blood becomes a seed of reconciliation in a country and a world crying out for peace. Yes, next year, on October 31, may we celebrate the feast of the Five Adorers of the Blood of Christ and their Companions and so remember their courage and our commitment to be people of reconciliation.

(Fr. Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S., "Blood of Christ, Courage of Martyrs, Save Us," The New Wine Press, November 25, 1992, Vol. 2, Issue 4)

Our charism of living out the Paschal mystery signified by the shedding of the Precious Blood of Jesus in his passion and crucifixion has taken on a whole new dimension in the willingness of Agnes, Barbara Ann, Joel, Kathleen, and Shirley to spill their blood for work they believed in and people they had learned to love. Their deaths have given us inspiration and are a source of pride and wonderment.

'It certainly has helped me realize more what Precious Blood spirituality is', observes Sister Marita Toenjes. 'Here is the shedding of blood of people I knew, people I grew up with, people I am related to.'

'Who are we?' asks Sister Marcia Kruse, a missionary to Bolivia, in a poem written after the death of the Liberian missionaries. 'We are they who profess to follow the Lamb wherever he goes./ ... / He invites. Deeper, come deeper into the mystery./ ... Deeper into the mystery. Loving, giving, bleeding along the way./ Tough faith for tough times./ But joy, down deep, of being transformed into Christ.../ All the while walking into the jaws of hell./ Hell! Makes you want to throw up./ The inhumanity, murder, mutilation/ .../ Our hearts are shredded, bleeding with his./ Our tears, mixed with his./ What are we doing here?/ We are—we are—just following the Lamb./ Africa, Latin America, Europe, America./ No, we don't want to get killed./ We simply want to follow the Lamb — wherever he goes.'

Marcia's co-worker in La Paz, Sister Anne Irose, writes, 'The five martyrs lived their charism of the Blood of Christ. Perhaps they didn't talk so much about it or use eloquent language. But they certainly lived the charism. This has made a deep impression on me. I believe these five are models for our whole congregation. We can get caught up in talking beautifully about the charism of the Blood of Christ. The lives of Shirley, Agnes, Kathleen, Barbara Anne, and Joel are living testimonies for us. Their lives and deaths speak volumes.'

Sister Ann Fearday adds, 'Embracing the Paschal Mystery is not often easy, but that is the heart of what we are about as Adorers of the Blood of Christ.' Sister Agnesine Jansen continues Ann's thought, 'For me these deaths have deepened the awareness and reality of the Paschal Mystery in my life. Before this, I never thought of or dreamt of having lived with one—much less five—Sisters who gave their lives carrying out their daily ministry and becoming martyrs of charity. These deaths,' Sister Agnesine goes on, 'have also deepened my faith. If we are faithful in our daily living, in carrying out our ordinary deeds out of love of God and his people, he will give us the strength and courage when big things are asked of us.'

Sister Janet Marie Wilhelm defines the martyrdom required for living out the Paschal Mystery: 'I think martyrdom is giving one's life day by day.' Sister Flora Santel, working in pastoral ministry in West Plains, Missouri, adds, 'We are known as Precious Blood Sisters. We are part of the redemptive act.'

Sister Mary Pauline Grady, community historian and a prison chaplain in Springfield, Missouri, sees a 'new depth of meaning to the blood of the chalice. Their blood, our blood, Jesus' blood is interconnected. I am a cup in which this blood has been sacrificed.' Sister Mary Shaw sees hope in the shedding of the blood of the five missionaries. 'Their life and their death calls us all to live out our charism,' she adds. 'This has been a crucifixion,' Sister Janis Yaekel, who works with the Earthworks project in Plymouth, Indiana, adds. 'But out of this is going to come new life. Like a baby bird that we don't have to feed; God's going to feed it.'

(from *M. Clare Boehmer, A.S.C. (comp.) Echoes in Our Hearts, 1994, p. 255-256*)

25. The Beast of Dachau

The forward thrust of this assignment is the infinitely powerful cause and prompt effect of a sincere devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus. I hope to accomplish this by employing the simple method of the greatest storyteller of all time, namely, Jesus, the simple carpenter from Nazareth.

Because I was woefully lacking in points, the army offered to send me to the states immediately after V.J. Day for 45 days, provided that I would agree to return to Japan for further occupational duty. I agreed in writing to this arrangement.

After 45 days of vacation in the states, I found myself clinging to the rail of a transport ship destined not for Japan but for Europe. When I arrived, I found Western Europe not only devastated but pulverized. The sight was ghastly and grim. In retrospect, insanely wasteful and dreadfully sad. For me, this duty still had another aspect: it was the coldest winter in Heidelberg in 50 years.

Malaria, amoebic dysentery, and battle fatigue became my constant and persistent companions. Time and again I appealed to return stateside to recuperate only to find myself holding on to yet another rail, not for the United States but to some ten different countries on what was called a recuperation basis.

Chaplain Medeaux was the area chaplain. He finally released me after I agreed to conduct 28 missions at all our mil-

itary installations. It was after a series of missions that I returned to home base, Frankfurt, for a few days' rest. Six Catholic chaplains lived in one house. I had not even closed the front door when Fr. Rush, the base chaplain, told me to report to headquarters promptly at 0900 the next morning.

The next morning I stood at the colonel's door. He looked up from his paper and said, "Father, sit down." When he finally finished the work at hand, he looked at me and spoke almost apologetically. "Father, we are sending you on a top secret mission. Only you and I, and a few men on my staff know where you will go and what you will do. The mission is so secret that if even the slightest part is leaked, we will know it came from you." I told him I had ample experience in keeping the seal of confession. For the first time he smiled and said, "You are right, Father, I got the right man."

The next morning I stood at attention in the colonel's office. He called in my driver and showed him the map of where he would be taking me. After the driver left, the colonel gave me further instructions. "After some 30 to 40 miles you will be stopped, your driver and jeep will be confiscated, and you will be transferred to a command car. From there you will take orders from the command car."

All this and more actually happened. I was not only transferred to the command car, I was frisked and my Mass kit was searched. I was no longer allowed to speak with my driver. After driving still another 30 or 40 miles I saw in the distance a tremendous complex on the outskirts of a forest. I suspected it was a prison camp. When we neared the camp, the huge iron gates swung open and I was suddenly caught in the jaws of what might be described as a dark hole.

Sandwiched between two guards, we were led by a sergeant to a large room. I was told to set up my Mass kit. As I set up for Mass, one prisoner came in. I protested strongly, saying that I had 9000 soldiers back in Frankfurt and had promised Fr. Rush that I would have 6:00 Mass for them. The sergeant told me he would see what he could do. One more prisoner came and when I repeated my protest to the sergeant, he took me to the far end of the room and whispered. "Father, the prisoners here are of such a dangerous nature that they will never permit more

than two in the same room at the same time."

After Mass with these two prisoners, I looked at my watch hoping I could still make Frankfurt in time for the 6:00 Mass. But the sergeant approached me and said, "Father, we have 17 prisoners who demand to see a Catholic chaplain. I will lead you from cell to cell." I no longer protested and simply followed him.

The prisoners were of all nationalities and religious convictions. Language was a barrier. Long after I should have been in Frankfurt, I took a deep sigh of relief. The ordeal, I thought, was over. But once more the sergeant approached me and said, "Now, Father, we have one more prisoner to see. For three days and nights she has screamed hysterically to see a Catholic priest. She is not Catholic but insisted on her Geneva rights to see you."

Since the sergeant had described this prisoner as "she", I asked him as he led me to her cell. "This would not be the 'beast' of Dachau, would it? The sergeant simply nodded and before I could protest, we were at her cell. The guards physically pushed me into the cell and closed the door behind me. When I looked around to see what protection I had, I saw two bayonets sticking through the peep hole. One guard comforted me by saying, "Father, don't worry. We will protect you."

In front of me, stretched out on a concrete floor, lay this terrible creature in utter, unbelievable despair. Without so much as raising her head, she demanded in a low, guttural voice, "You are a Catholic priest?"

"I am."

"Prove it." Her German was excellent.

"What precisely do you want me to say to prove that I am a Catholic priest?"

"Say the Ave in Latin," she said. I did.

"Now say the confiteor in Latin." Every altar boy knows that this is, of all the prayers, the most difficult. But I said it to her satisfaction.

Then she put me in a real bind. "Now give me the words of absolution in Latin," she said. I hesitated for a minute but obliged her even with my reservations.

Now raising her head slightly, she literally trounced on me.

She cursed me, ridiculed me, scoffed at me, and denounced me in the most correct German but in the most terrible language. Over and over she screamed, "I am damned! I am damned! My father cursed me, my mother cursed me, every innocent prisoner I led to his death cursed me! Yes, the prisoners I slowly tortured to death cursed me a thousand times over!" Staring at me with a diabolical look, she said, "What makes you foolish enough to think that you can forgive my sins when not even God has the power to forgive me?"

When I was near total exhaustion from this tirade, she forcefully thrust her hands into my face and screamed, "You damn fool! Can't you see the blood of thousands of innocent prisoners dripping from my hands? I am cursed! I am damned forever!"

I now took the lead. "Olga (not her real name), I cannot see the blood of a thousand prisoners dripping from your hands, but I can see the Precious Blood of Jesus dripping from the cross. I do not condone your terrible sins—many as the sands of the seashore and red and scarlet. My memories of Dachau are deeply imprinted. I was there only a week ago. Yes, I saw the shelves and shelves of souvenirs made out of the skins of prisoners. I saw your ghastly work. I saw the crematories, the underground rooms full to the ceiling with urns containing the ashes of dead prisoners. Even more horrible, I saw the kennels where you detained and starved dogs and then stood by the gate and watched the hungry dogs tear dozens of prisoners to pieces. I saw the grave that contained some 30,000 of the noble dead. I saw all that and much more.

"But I remind you that your greatest sin is the arrogance, your diabolical pride, your terrible boast that God does not have the power to undo what Olga has done — forgive her sins. You want to go down in history for all to see and know that Olga did something that God cannot undo and therefore Olga is more powerful than God. I repeat, your sins are horrible but the most heinous is your pride, your arrogance, your boast, your despair!

"Yes, you see the blood of a thousand innocent prisoners dripping from your hands, then why not see the Precious Blood of Jesus dripping from the cross? The blood of Jesus redeemed all mankind. If the Precious Blood of Jesus could redeem the

sins of all the world, how dare you say, how dare you boast, that it is not powerful enough to cleanse the sins of one individual!

"I now challenge you, like the good thief, repent! And like him, you may see the kingdom of God, if not today then certainly in the future. Acknowledge your crimes humbly and sorrowfully and learn that God is infinitely merciful and forgiving. Weep for your sins and like Peter you will say, 'Not by worthless silver and gold but by the Precious Blood of Christ you were redeemed.'"

Most unexpectedly, Olga collapsed. She broke into uncontrollable sobbing that seemed to shake even the concrete floor of her cell. Over and over she pleaded, "Herr Pater, bitte berüsetzen, berüsetzen." ("Please repeat, repeat, translate again.") And finally she exclaimed, "It is true, yes, it is true. God is infinitely powerful and infinitely merciful." Slowing she scuffled back to her cot on her knees. I watched her and even wept with her. I so completely and gratefully agreed with her. After awhile, I left.

Before leaving the complex, I asked the sergeant to take me back to her cell. I looked through the peep hole and there she sat on her cot like a Grecian marble statue. She repeated over and over, "It is true, God is merciful and infinitely powerful." A second time I left her — never to see her again.

The trip back to Frankfurt was long and I had ample time to think. And the thought that remains with me even today is what human cleverness or worldly wisdom cannot accomplish, the Precious Blood of Jesus can. For certainly it was the Precious Blood that produced this miraculous effect — the conversion of Olga.

(Fr. Kilian Dreiling, C.P.P.S., "The Power of the Precious Blood," *The New Wine Press*, Vol. 2, Issue 9, April 25, 1993.)

MARY, MADONNA OF THE BLOOD

26. Mary, Madonna of the Blood

May is Mary's month. Three feasts during this month are set aside for Mary: May 12, Mother of Mercy; May 24, Help of Christians; and May 31, the Visitation. Mary claims this month by the church from our European pagan ancestors, celebrating spring, fertility, and the earth mother with such things as flowers, dances, planting feasts, and maypoles. May 24 in particular commemorates the return of Pius VII to Rome in 1814 from his Napoleonic exile. Thus our Society's original title includes the invocation to Mary, Help of Christians, and we were founded on August 15, 1815, the Assumption.

Gaspar himself had a particular devotion to Mary. He used a special painting of Mary, the "Madonna of the Chalice." Originally by an unknown artist, Gaspar had a man named Pozzi add a chalice in Jesus' hand to the painting already popular and used by others before him in missions. He used this representation at a special crowning moment during his missions by uncovering the painting in a flourish; its unusually gentle and smiling Madonna represented all the attractiveness and mercifulness of motherhood to even the most hardened of hearts. He called this moment "The Victory Sermon." The print was to be displayed in mission houses and during missions. Gaspar used to say, "How beautiful it is to stand with Mary at the foot of the cross!" He used the attractive and gentle mother to invite the people to follow him spiritually to the foot of the cross.

In *Lumen Gentium* (67) when the Second Vatican Council expresses itself about Mary, it teaches that devotion to Mary "proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to recognize the excellence of the Mother of God and by which we are moved to filial love toward our Mother, and to imitation of her virtues."

These characteristics worthy of imitation come from Mary's

oldest titles as old as the New Testament and in use as early as the second century; by then she is already being invoked in eucharistic prayers. Her titles are Mother of God and New Eve. Both are because of her relationship with Jesus. According to one legend Mary died in Ephesus, home of perhaps the most famous temple of the Earth Mother goddess, and a place where the church proclaimed her as Theotokos in 431 at the Council of Ephesus. The title is reminiscent of the Old Testament term "Queen Mother" as "gebirah" rooted in the notion of a woman with the strength and qualities of a warrior, a woman who "runs with wolves."

For our enterprise of Precious Blood Spirituality, we might best be with Mary at the moment of Visitation to the marginalized in their giving birth to a new and just world order with a new song of God's gracious love for them. Here she is most being that sacred vessel or cup which is the source of Jesus' own blood, her milk the source of Jesus' own growth. Rarely has eurocentric art shown Mary pregnant, but here she is full of incarnation. We might best be with Mary at the foot of the cross where she offers the sacrifice of her son; there she has been shown in artistic imagination as catching the Precious Blood in her chalice or assuaging his wounds, blood-staining her veil, in like manner ourselves standing with the marginalized outside the gates in their suffering and blood shedding. Pope Pius XII wrote in *Mystici Corporis* (1943), "It was she who offered him on Golgotha." Pope Leo XIII wrote in *Jucunda Semper* (1894), "There stood by the cross his mother who...willingly offered her own Son." This sounds like a very priestly act to me. We can begin to consider the blood of women as sacred blood and life-giving in a healthier understanding of many Old Testament texts. Finally we might best be with Mary in the midst of the earliest community on Pentecost as Luke describes in Acts receiving her own full share of the Spirit and empowered to preach and witness to the gospel as we take a stand for the right role of women in the full ministry of the church, in a real implementation of the New Covenant.

I am not only suggesting that we merely recast our thoughts about Mary in modern language that is somehow more attractive, but to say that we have some historical foundation for a

completely new development of our devotion to Mary and her place in our spirituality out of the work of liberation and feminist theologies. There's a great deal that needs to be done in these areas, and it is in these directions that my reflections on Mary have led me.

(Fr. Alan Hartway, C.P.P.S., "Reflections on the Woman of the New Covenant and Precious Blood Spirituality," *The New Wine Press*, May 25, 1994)

There is a person near the cross, sometimes standing, sometimes slumping, always crying, who understands the music of the night. Here is where Mary, the Madonna of the Precious Blood, stands in our spirituality. She is a woman of sorrows who knows the night and the meaning of morning.

Mary, unwed mother, says yes to a plan only God could conceive. A frightened young woman who discovers one day she is pregnant. Faced with choices, she knows some will try to shame her and blame her. But most of all, she thinks about her beloved and how to tell him. She wonders if he will leave or stay by her side. Confused and fearful, she races off to her cousin, Elizabeth, to share a moment that lasts for months.

Mary, humble mother, is star-struck by all the attention this child of hers is receiving. The poor and rich come to visit. Lavish gifts but one that unsettles her a bit: myrrh. An odd gift to give a child. Isn't myrrh used to prepare a body for burial?

Mary, political refugee, flees with her husband and baby to another country to escape persecution. This child of hers has created a stir and brought down the wrath of the ruler. In her escape, nursing the child at her breast, she grieves for those mothers and holy innocents left behind, not fortunate enough to discover a future in their dreams.

Mary, proud parent, brings her child to the temple and hears the wise old man tell how this child will be the rise and fall of many. She thought she might have to wait until her son's graduation to hear these accolades. But even in the midst of the old man's avalanche of expectation, there is a dire prediction of a pierced heart. And she remembers the myrrh.

Mary, distraught mother, finds out halfway home from vacation that their twelve-year old son isn't with them. She and her

husband look everywhere and finally find him in the temple. He is teaching the elders. He deserves discipline but how does one punish a prodigy?

Mary, concerned mother, tells her son to help out at a wedding feast of a friend. She doesn't want the couple to be embarrassed because the wine has run out.

Mary, confused mother, stands outside the house while her son, an aspiring rabbi, is sitting inside surrounded by prostitutes, tax collectors, and other riff-raff. This must have been one of those arrows the old man was talking about. She does not understand her son's bizarre behavior. He's been working too hard. She wants him to come home and get some rest.

Mary, grieving mother, slumps at the foot of the cross, her hands and hair splashed with the blood of her dying son. Now the old man's words and the memory of myrrh make sense.

Mary, faithful mother, listens as her son in his dying breath takes care of her future. She won't have to live alone. His closest friend, John, will provide for her. And she for him.

Mary, mourning mother, cradles her dead son in her arms. Is there a wound more grievous or lasting than this—a mother holding the lifeless body of her first born? Her tears mingle with the blood seeping from her son's forehead. She remembers holding him for the first time that night long ago when the stars were bright and the future was forever. Now she holds him for the last time. There are no stars, no sun, no future now. Only gloom, darkness, and memories.

The memory of myrrh.

(Fr. Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S., *Passionate Pilgrims, Resource Series, # 13, The Messenger Press, Carthagen, Ohio, 1993, pp. 101-103*)

THE GOSPEL OF LIFE, THE GOSPEL OF BLOOD

27. The Gospel of Life

"You have come to the sprinkled blood" (cf. Heb. 12:22,24): signs of hope and invitation to commitment.

"The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground" (*Gen 4:10*). It is not only the voice of the blood of Abel, the first innocent man to be murdered, which cries to God, the source and defender of life. The blood of every other human being who has been killed since Abel is also a voice raised to the Lord. In an absolutely singular way, as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us, *the voice of the blood of Christ*, of whom Abel in his innocence is a prophetic figure, cries out to God: "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God ... to the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel" (12:22,24).

It is the *sprinkled blood*. A symbol and prophetic sign of it had been the blood of the sacrifices of the Old Covenant, whereby God expressed his will to communicate his own life to men, purifying and consecrating them (cf. *Ex 24:8; Lev 17:11*). Now all of this is fulfilled and comes true in Christ: his is the sprinkled blood which redeems, purifies and saves; it is the blood of the Mediator of the New Covenant "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (*Mt 26:28*). This blood, which flows from the pierced side of Christ on the Cross (cf. *Jn 19:34*), "speaks more graciously" than the blood of Abel; indeed, it expresses and requires a more radical "justice", and above all it implores mercy, it makes intercession for the brethren before the Father (cf. *Heb 7:25*), and it is the source of perfect redemption and the gift of new life.

The blood of Christ, while it reveals the grandeur of the Father's love, *shows how precious man is in God's eyes and how priceless the value of his life*. The Apostle Peter reminds us of

this: "You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pt 1:18-19). Precisely by contemplating the precious blood of Christ, the sign of his self-giving love (cf. Jn 13:1), the believer learns to recognize and appreciate the almost divine dignity of every human being and can exclaim with ever renewed and grateful wonder: "How precious must man be in the eyes of the Creator, if he 'gained so great a Redeemer' (Exultet of the Easter Vigil), and if God 'gave his only Son' in order that man 'should not perish but have eternal life' (cf. Jn 3:16)!"

Furthermore, Christ's blood reveals to man that his greatness, and therefore his vocation, consists in the *sincere gift of self*. Precisely because it is poured out as the gift of life, the blood of Christ is no longer a sign of death, of definitive separation from the brethren, but the instrument of a communion which is richness of life for all. Whoever in the Sacrament of the Eucharist drinks this blood and abides in Jesus (cf. Jn 6:56) is drawn into the dynamism of his love and gift of life, in order to bring to its fullness the original vocation to love which belongs to everyone (cf. Gen 1:27; 2:18-24).

It is from the blood of Christ that all draw *the strength to commit themselves to promoting life*. It is precisely this blood that is *the most powerful source of hope, indeed it is the foundation of the absolute certitude that in God's plan life will be victorious*. "And death shall be no more", exclaims the powerful voice which comes from the throne of God in the Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 21:4). And Saint Paul assures us that the present victory over sin is a sign and anticipation of the definitive victory over death, when there "shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory'. 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' " (1 Cor 15:54-55).

(Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 25 March 1995, no. 25)

It is a long time since in our milieu one speaks of the "Gospel of Blood". This phrase begins to become familiar. What does it

mean?

We can explain it in this way: "It is a good news that comes from understanding profoundly the mystery of the Blood of Christ". Such good news, like that of the Gospel, from which it is taken to the point of constructing an important and all-inclusive nucleus, is not something that is peripheral but comprehends all of human life and radically transforms it. The Gospel of Blood, therefore, is appropriately called also, the Gospel of Life. The text of Pope John Paul II expounds magnificently upon this assertion.

The Pope places the reader before two classic scenes of importance to the blood: two emblematic stories: that of Abel and that of Christ. One cannot avoid it. It is intentional. John Paul II—according to the author of the Letter to the Hebrew—makes from the two bloods, two archetypes. The blood of Abel, poured out by Cain and the Blood of Christ sprinkled over humanity, convey two messages. In the blood poured out by Cain, the Pope sees the beginning and the key to interpreting all the evil that has poisoned human life until our own day. In the Blood of Christ, on the contrary, he sees a way out from the evil towards salvation, that which the Christian calls redemption.

The first chapter of the encyclical is titled: "The Voice of Your Brother's Blood Cries To Me From The Ground" and has as a subtitle, "Present Day Threats To Human Life". The chapter is all full of these two bloods that confront one another. God has created the human person for life. The immortal breath of the Creator penetrates the person, it is located in the blood, and makes him crowned with glory, a little less than an angel. Death enters into the life of the person because of the envy of the devil; and enters in a violent way as a consequence of sin.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" responds Cain to God when God asks about Abel.

When Cain responds in such a way to God, he has already killed Abel. The phrase is therefore arrogant; an attempt to avoid a discussion; it is an evasive response. But taken in itself, it appears fascinating and indisputable and seems that humanity today wishes to appropriate it for herself.

Yes, cries the Pope. Everyone of us ought to feel responsible

for our brother and sister. God will ask us about our brother..."I shall demand an account of man as regards his fellow man..." (Gn. 9,5) Human life is sacred and is not to be disposed of by another human person. This is inviolable. God has entrusted it to us because, living it according to its intrinsic value and in the bond of love with God and neighbor, we reveal day after day the glory of God. "The Glory of God is the human person fully alive."

The irresponsibility which is at the bottom of the phrase of Cain, is the same which leads to indifference towards the marginalized and —let us think well— is the same that leads to violence against others. In fact, if the other is free to do what he wants, to go where he wants without me being "his keeper", then I am also free to do what I want and no one can pretend to have the right to be my guardian. The conclusion: I am not accountable to anyone! No one is accountable to anyone else! No one has the right to ask me anything about anything. On the contrary, if such a society wants to have a task, it should be that of allowing everybody to do whatever he wants.

No! cries the pope. God did not leave the weak helpless. The blood does not permit it. God says to Cain: "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!" (Gn. 4, 10) Cain did not hear the voice of the blood, of his own blood that flowed through the veins of his brother. That voice called him to be pleased with his own brother, and that he follow his example. However, jealousy and anger armed his hand. Now that spilled blood invokes justice from the ground which is soiled by it.

But, comments the pope, "the voice of the spilled blood of humanity does not cease to cry out from one generation to another, assuming tones and different and always new accents." "It is not only the voice of the blood of Abel, the first innocent man to be murdered, which cries to God, the source and defender of life. The blood of every other human being who has been killed since Abel is also a voice raised to the Lord" (n. 25).

The question God directs to Cain remains very current if we direct it to the human beings of our days: "What have you done?" How much blood is shown, how much blood is hidden, how many insults against the blood in the chronicles of our

time! The blood remains intact in its power to denounce. Pay attention to it. All the expressions of violence wherever they be found, are at least loathed by public opinion: wars, massacres on Saturday nights, syringes infected with AIDS, acts of violence... It is a blood which cries for justice from the earth. But it doesn't cry any less than that blood which dirties the anti-septic hands of the surgeon which extracts the embryo by means of suction; or the test tube of the apprentice magician, which manipulates the genetic patrimony; or the formula of the chemist which prepares poisons destined to kill off the first seeds of human life; or the cold minds of the industrialist which calculates how and where to place his factory in order to exploit the poor, underpaying their work... There doesn't exist in the criminal annals cases more "premeditated crimes". It is an affirmation which may make a stir, but is difficult to deny it. The cream of science and the best of technology are involved in this; enormous capital has been invested...

"In an absolutely singular way", writes the pope, "the voice of the blood of Christ of whom Abel in his innocence is a prophetic figure, cries to God". The blood of Christ is the true purifying blood; or, if one prefers, is the blood of the true cleansing. It is not only a figure of salvation, but carries it out. In this, all who prefigure it and all who await it, find their completion. This inaugurates and upholds the new era of which so many of the prophets speak.

(Don Michele Colagiovanni, *"Evangelium Sanguinis"*, *Nel Segno del Sangue*, Rome, May 1995, pp. 95-107)

28. The Sprinkling of the Blood

The people sprinkled (with the blood) is the people of the New and Eternal Covenant; it is the Church: called to give testimony to the newness of life.

Here is the reason why the voice of the blood of Christ, of whom Abel in his innocence is a prophetic figure, cries to God "in an absolutely singular way." The uniqueness resides in the excellence of the same blood and in the content of the cry. Regarding this second point the Pope explains the significance of the cry: it is the blood that redeems, purifies, saves and that establishes the New Covenant; it is poured out for many for the

forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:28). "This blood", the Pope writes textually, "which flows from the pierced side of Christ on the cross (cf. Jn 19:34) speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel; indeed it expresses and requires a more radical justice, and above all it implores mercy, it makes intercession for the brethren before the Father (cf. Heb: 7:25) and is the source of perfect redemption and the gift of new life".

And so the Pope writes: "The blood of Christ, while it reveals the grandeur of the Father's love, shows how precious man is in God's eyes and how priceless the value of his life." He goes on to say: "Furthermore, Christ's blood reveals to man that his greatness, and therefore his vocation, consists in the sincere gift of self. Precisely because it is poured out as the gift of life, the blood of Christ is no longer a sign of death, of definitive separation from the brethren, but the instrument of a communion which is richness of life for all." And finally, the Pope says: "It is from the blood of Christ that all draw the strength to commit themselves to promoting life. It is precisely this blood that is the most powerful source of hope, indeed it is the foundation of the absolute certitude that in God's plan life will be victorious."

These four hinges of the Christian vision of humanity are kept before us. This is the *Gospel of Life*, or rather the *Gospel of Blood*. The remainder of the encyclical is a deduction and consequential construction. The four pillars which the Pope has deduced, that is to say, from the "voice of the blood of Christ" form the backbone which holds all the encyclical in place.

The Pope affirms that in the blood of Christ all the ancient promises are fulfilled. This blood communicates life, purifies and saves; establishes a new world of relations, based upon absolute blood-ties, making therefore all things new. Well then, such an affirmation openly demonstrates the second chapter. The Pope makes us hear again the word of God and meditates upon the Gospel. Already the title of the second chapter is eloquent: "I came that they may have Life". The phrase continues: "that they may have it to the full" (Jn. 10:10). The words of Albertini in the chaplet of the Precious Blood come to mind when he says that the blood of the Redeemer was poured out "until the last drop for our freedom". Truly it is "to the full".

True life is made visible and we have seen it (1 Jn 1:2). The

Christian message about life is such that every believer is able and ought to make his own the words of the canticle: "My strength and my song is the Lord, he has saved me (Ex 15:2). God in Christ again has given again vigor to the human person revealing that all of life has value. In the precariousness of human existence Christ brings to completion the gospel of life. The birth of Christ is presented as "great joy" and his death as the moment of Redemption. It is the joy that arises from ascertaining that death is defeated forever and that life springs up not from the prospective of death but from eternity. All this is testified to by the blood, which is also a river of mercy for all the times that the human being sincerely recognizes that he has been unworthy of his own greatness.

It follows from all this, that life has to be loved as a precious gift and lived in union with Christ, because only he who believes in him will have eternal life.

All human life ought to be loved, therefore every human person. All life must be loved: from the moment of conception until death.

The blood of Christ, while revealing the greatness of the Father's love, manifests how a human being is precious in the eyes of God and how inestimable is the value of his life. Since in practice such value is not always appreciated, all too often decisively unappreciated, the Pope dedicates the third chapter of the encyclical to the denouncing of the most grave forms of scorn towards life. He comments on the command "you shall not kill". After thousands of years, this commandment which seemed to denounce a barbarian characteristic of the primitive peoples, not only is topical now, but is broken with a frequency unknown to other epochs. The Holocaust has not been carried out by culturally backward peoples. It is an indelible stain of our times, at the end of the second millennium! And the genocides, ethnic cleansings, are daily chronicles. Then the holocaust of all holocausts: the immense wound of abortion, so much more pernicious because it is seen without the horror that universally recognized and provoked the Holocaust.

This commandment, says the Pope, explicitly has a strong negative content: it indicates the extreme borderline that no one can ever cross. This implicitly releases a positive attitude

towards an absolute respect for life, leading people to respect it and urging them towards love. To kill a human being, on whom the image of God is stamped, is like attacking the very life of God. Life is sacred because it involves a creative action of God. Life is sacred from its very beginning; and it is sacred until its last breath.

"The blood of Christ, moreover, reveals to man his greatness, and therefore his vocation which consists in the true gift of self. Precisely because it is poured out as a gift of life, the blood of Christ is no longer a sign of death, of definitive separation from the brethren, but the instrument of a communion which is richness of life for all."

In the fourth chapter the Pope confronts the issue of a life interpreted as a gift. It is another way of giving blood for the common good: to place one's personal energies at the disposition of others. The same chapter title expresses fully this concern: "You did it for me". Therefore, any service done to one of the least of his brothers, shall be considered as done to Christ himself. And there is no one "more little" than a child not born, or an elderly person, or a sick and powerless person. The first service in these cases is to proclaim the gospel of life: shout from the housetops that their life is full of value.

But to make this type of announcement in today's world, so closed in its utilitarianism, so rebellious to a spirit of redemptive sacrifice, brings such a witness to the point of martyrdom: to blood. Here one understands what the Pope said in the well-known number 25, concluding his exposition on the blood of Christ: "It is from the blood of Christ that all human beings draw the strength to commit themselves to promoting life. It is precisely this blood that is the most powerful source of hope, indeed it is the foundation of the absolute certitude that in God's plan life will be victorious."

So therefore, the blood of Christ is the fountain of strength for witness and also motive of hope. These two affirmations point also to a cooperation: strength is born from the hope that is an absolute certainty in the triumph of good.

The people of God ought to be a people of life and for life. They ought to know how to implement a new culture: the authentic culture of life.

(D. Michele Colagiovanni, C.P.P.S. "Evangelium Sanguinis," *Nel Segno del Sangue*, Roma, May 1995, pp. 99-107)

SUMMING UP OUR SPIRITUALITY

29. The Blood in the New Testament

Two great themes dominate *Ephesians* — *the unity of all things in Christ and the Church as the symbol and agent of that unity*. In fact the word *one* occurs some eight times in the Epistle, four of which are to be found in chapter 2 immediately after the mentioning of the blood of Christ in verse 13. In fact all of chapter 2 is divided as follows: 2:1-10 concerns the call of Israel which has been called to completion of faith in Christ Jesus. The author joins himself to the Jews who were called to firm belief in Jesus Christ. He tells them that they were chosen so that they might be brought to life through Christ. Then in 2:11-12 he turns his attention to the Gentiles who had not been part of the promises or the covenant of old. In fact they had been far off and excluded from the community of Israel without hope and without God.

It is precisely through the *blood of Christ* that the Jew and the Gentile are made one in the peace of Christ. In 2:13.17 the author cites Trito-Isaiah 57:19: "Peace, peace, to the far and to the near, says the Lord; and I will heal him." This text is found in the context of Messianic comfort for the afflicted. *Ephesians* 2:13-16 reads: But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near through the blood of Christ. It is he who is our peace and who made the two of us one by breaking down the barrier of hostility that kept us apart. In his own flesh he abolished the law with its commands and precepts, to create in himself one new man from us who had been two and to make peace, reconciling both of us to God in one body through his cross, which put that enmity to death.

Christ Jesus is the center in whom the Jewish and Gentile Christians come together for Christ is the instrument, the channel through whom God works his will, elects, redeems, forgives, blesses and imparts new life and builds up the Church. *In*

Christ is the formula of God's activity through Christ. The Christian is incorporated into Christ through Jesus' blood. The Christian takes upon himself the same life-spirit which Jesus had. The Christian shares in the life of Jesus. *In the blood of Christ* is an expression in which the word *in* has the value of mediation. There is a living connection between the believer and the source of life. Blood served as the vehicle of life according to the Israelites and was the medium of purification and expiation for sin (Lev. 17:11) and a guarantee for the Covenant (Ex. 24:8).

The New Covenant has been sealed by the blood of Jesus as expressly stated in Mt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 11:25; Luk. 22:30; Mk. 24:24. The New Covenant as announced by Jeremiah's prophecy 31:31-34 has as a principal effect the remission of sins *for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more* which is brought out in Eph. 1:7. Messianic peace was another element of the New Covenant announced throughout the history of the Chosen People as brought out by Isaiah 54:10...my covenant of peace shall not be removed says the Lord, who has compassion on you. This peace which is implied in Eph. 2:13 is made explicit in the following verses which are a hymn about Christ who is our Peace and the bearer of peace due to the shedding of his blood. The verse presents the work of Christ as a gathering together of pagans to God and to the Jews and the Jews and pagans together being gathered to God. It is in the corporate dimension wrought by the blood of Christ that this togetherness is achieved.

It should be noted that the passage which we have briefly looked at is an epistle which speaks about the unity of pagan and Jew alike in Christ Jesus. Jesus' blood is said to be the unifying element of peace for both groups. Why didn't the author speak merely about the death of Christ as the unifying element? Why didn't the author speak about the ascended Christ as the unifying element? Why did he choose the blood?

The point being made is that blood with its symbolism of life and its counter-symbolism of death was meaningful for the people for whom the New Testament was written. That is why the author of *Ephesians* in speaking about the unity of pagans and Jews mentions the blood. It was meaningful to both pagans and

Jews. There is a universal recognition of its symbolism according to Dennis J. McCarthy "Il simbolismo del sangue," *Sangue e Antropologia Biblica*, 1981. Blood evoked unity in Biblical times and when one strips away the veneer of sophistication, it does the same today.

Jesus Christ's blood is the focus for life. The blood of Christ brings real unity and peace. Why the blood of Christ and not merely to say his life? Biblical people were down to earth people; they dealt with the concrete, the real, the sensible. They were not interested in abstract terms for abstract terms were rather incomprehensible. Blood was tangible, visible, sensible. It was the vehicle God desired to couch his language about salvation. It was a fit means to convey God's message both to Jewish and Gentile Christians. They could understand its "unifying" symbolism. By the eucharistic sharing of Christ's blood, Christians were united to Christ for they shared his life and at the same time they were fully incorporated into the Body of Christ (the Church). Why the blood? God willed it.

All praise and honor and blessing be to the blood of Jesus, now and forever. Amen!

(Fr. Patrick J. Sena, C.P.P.S., "The New Testament and the Blood of Christ", *Precious Blood Spirituality Workshop, Rome, 1986, pp. 78-84*)

30. Covenant, Cross, Chalice

If we see the ministry of the covenant as central to what we do, then our special focus and contribution to the overall mission of the Church would center around two things: community-building and communication. In the ministries of the Church which we would undertake, a special trademark would be concern for building up the bonding which is the cement of community. We would be interested in overcoming the isolation which individuals feel and which the individualism of our culture makes us particularly prone to. We would help people find their identity in their relation to God and to one another. That would be fostered particularly by our helping people break down the obstacles to communication, that their realities might be expressed fully and without oppression.

Our motive in this: the Covenant, New and Everlasting,

made with us in the shedding of Christ's Blood. Gaspar saw this ministry in the ministry of renewal, which should lead to a renewed awareness of our relation to God and God's great love for us. The shedding of Christ's own Blood reveals to us at once the great love which is the source of any meaningful life, and the violence and death which constantly threaten it. It also opens up the possibility for a Eucharistic spirituality, in which the hopes and hungers of the human heart are taken up. And it certainly reinforces our tradition of hospitality.

I would suggest that we explore situations in our ministry which address problems of bonding and communication. In bonding: fidelity in marriage and other commitments, the isolation of the elderly, the commitment to a full and consistent ethic of life, the inclusion of those oppressed and marginalized in our society. In communication: those escapes from communication into alcohol and drug abuse, those breakdowns of communication in marriages and families and local communities.

The cross stands at the center of our history. It is through the bloodshedding on the cross that we have been saved, been brought back into relationship with God. The cross symbolizes the great paradox in Christian faith: life can come about through death, the weakness and powerlessness of suffering can be the road to strength, the instrument of human shame becomes the throne of divine glory. The cross, as the altar of sacrifice through which the Son unites earth and heaven, marks the overcoming of death through the death of one person.

The Blood is, of course, the prime symbol of that death. The Blood of Christ, in which the very divine life was lodged, is shed utterly in this violent act. But out of that shedding has come new life, the Church, and the enduring grace by which we are all freed from everlasting death. The Blood of the cross speaks to us of unjust suffering, of sacrifice and consecration, of the weak overtaking the powerful.

What would such a spirituality of the cross mean for our mission as the Society of the Precious Blood? If we see the ministry of the cross as central to what we do, then our special focus and contribution to the mission of the Church would center around our commitment to those who suffer. A trademark of our ministry would be the special attention we give to those

who suffer: from physical illness, from mental anguish, from circumstances in their lives over which they have little or no control, from the effects of their own and others' sin. Such a spirituality would not see suffering as something to be avoided (as our culture does), but as a Calvary road which can lead to a renewal of human life. We would be interested in staying with people in their suffering and help them find their way through it, either in terms of integrating its reality into their lives, or by transforming their circumstances to achieve a genuine liberation.

Our motive is this: the Blood shed on the cross reminds us that suffering is real and usually unjust, but also that it need not prevail. The Blood is the source of strength to endure, but also the sign of ultimate hope, that no suffering need be forever. A ministry of the cross means that we confront the suffering, the death, the contradictions of our lives, but with the confidence that there is a larger reality which can redeem us.

I would suggest that we explore situations in our ministry which address problems of suffering. Gaspar himself died caring for the sick during a plague. He followed the Pope into exile and was a great comfort to him in his suffering. We, too, address the problems of suffering in our ministries: among those who are sick in body and spirit, or who suffer the effects of their years; those who are disabled; those who are oppressed because of race, ethnic group, or whatever reason.

The ministry of the chalice brings together the two previous images in a special way. When related to the covenant, it celebrates the life given us by the New Covenant in Christ's Blood. When related to the cross, it becomes the biblical cup of suffering which Jesus saw in the Garden of Gethsemane, the cup of suffering which is offered to the disciples. When raised up in the Eucharist and partaken of by those present, it is an invitation to remember and witness to suffering as well as to the hope for glory and communion. As the apocalyptic cup of wrath, it will be poured out in judgment upon the unjust.

The Blood is, of course, the reason the cup becomes a symbol. It is at once the force of life and of death. The cup raised up is a witness to those realities; the cup shared marks our participation in them. It is a sign of not forgetting the pain of the

past; it is a sign of the remembrance and hope to which we are called; it is the sign of vindication for those who now suffer.

What would a ministry of the chalice mean for our mission as the Society of the Precious Blood? If we see the ministry of the chalice as central to what we do, then our special focus and contribution to the mission of the Church would center upon our solidarity with the people we serve and work with: solidarity in their sufferings and in their hope. In this, our ministry of the chalice comes not only through divine ordination or institution, but also through this solidarity. We raise up the chalice not only through divine empowerment, but because we can gather and announce the sufferings and hopes of the community we lead. We offer the chalice in communion not only as priests or ministers of communion, but also because we, too, drink of the same cup of suffering and salvation. The ministry of the chalice is a ministry of justice, the ministry of Him who was crushed yet arose.

Our motive is this: the Bloodshedding of Christ shows Our Lord in his complete identification with the extremes of human experience. The chalice becomes the ritual way of remembering and not forgetting, of catching the paradox of crushed grapes that ferment to a new reality, of sharing together to ease the burden of life and to share out its joys.

I would suggest that we explore situations in our ministry which address problems of solidarity. What does that mean in terms of our own commitment to the option for the poor, as well as ministry to the not-so-poor? Are we noted for understanding what is happening to our people: the unemployed, the young, the parents of the young, those who suffer? How complete is our mandate to raise the chalice, to share the cup in the community we serve?

Let me say just a few things in conclusion. There are many other biblical images which could inform an apostolic spirituality of the Blood of Christ: the Lamb, the High Priest, the Suffering Servant, the Vine and the Branches, the Winepress. These three, however, the covenant, the cross, the chalice, are for me the most compelling and, I believe, the most challenging for our spirituality as a community. Others may be added and are of course not excluded. But we have to start somewhere,

and we need to commit ourselves somewhere.

Second, you may have noticed that in talking about ministries we should undertake as distinctively C.P.P.S. I did not engage in sorting through which apostolates we shall keep and which we shall do away with. In my own reflections, I think this is the wrong way to go about spirituality and development of mission for our own Society. I emphasized, rather, certain qualities which are trademarks of our work: community-building and enhancement of communication, commitment to those who suffer, solidarity in the suffering and hopes of those whom we serve. I did not say that on this basis we should, for example, keep parishes, but drop military chaplaincies; or keep hospitals, but drop prisons; or keep retreat centers, but drop schools. Those qualities I have outlined as our trademarks can wither or flourish in any of those settings. We may have to evaluate in certain instances whether this or that place should be kept; and we may find certain apostolates to be inconsonant with a spirituality of covenant, cross and chalice. But we should concentrate more on the spirituality which binds us together, both in how we work and how we treat each other, and then discern particulars of our mission in that context. Some of the latter will have to be done, but it should be out of our spirituality rather than some other criteria.

And a final point. To know our spirituality is to know a lot about our identity. If we are attuned to a spirituality which, internally, is marked by the bond of charity, by hospitality, concern for one another (and especially the ill, the wounded, the elderly of our Society); and, externally, by our commitments to community-building and renewal of communication, to the suffering, and to justice, then we are making our unique mark within the ministry of the Church. This is not the full range of Christian virtue or ministry; nor does it encompass every apostolate. Yet it is valid, necessary, and of great service.

But to speak of justice or communication or solidarity is to engage in fairly abstract language. The real stuff of our spirituality is in our stories which cluster around those images of covenant, cross, and chalice. There our spirituality of the Blood of Christ is to be found. There it is poured out, lifted up, and shared.

(Fr. Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S., Cincinnati C.P.P.S. Newsletter, July 1, 1985, pp. 1658-1659)

31. Witnesses to the Blood of Christ

I wish to develop the following thoughts: The Precious Blood spirituality is truly a way of life, a way through life, a way to life, because therein we discover what is truly a fundamental spirituality, which is an integral aspect of the Church, which makes us into apostles, and which leads us to the praise and glory of God.

If one reads the life of St. Gaspar one sees that the message of the Blood of Christ is so overpowering that he needed nothing else to sustain his immense physical activity. Today, too, as people observe those involved in the apostolate of Christ's blood, shed out of love for us, they repeat the words of the Bible: "They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar with eagles' wings. They will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint (Isaiah 40:31)."

People have always longed for redemption; sometimes, they imagined strange ways in which it could be accomplished. But in Jesus we see a redemption accomplished which is so marvelous that it seems hardly possible. It is God himself who accomplishes the redemption in the Blood of Jesus. It is a real redemption; not some creation of the human imagination. Because it is shed in love, the power of the Divine Blood is real; it is truly a treasure of wisdom and knowledge because it enlightens us about the real relation between God and humanity: whoever is washed in the Blood of Jesus is really sanctified, really justified, really enlightened.

The texts in the Bible which speak about blood, especially about the Blood of Jesus, present it as an instrument of reconciliation, peace and unity between God and us and among all peoples. We read in the second chapter of Ephesians: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near through the Blood of Jesus. It is he who is our peace and who made the two of us one by breaking down the barrier of hostility that kept us apart" (Ephesians 2: 13-14). From this flows our responsibility to work to achieve this unity in a tireless apostolate.

If, today, we speak of the Church's "option for the poor," let us remember how St. Gaspar, as a young priest, showed great zeal in the apostolate to those who were abandoned, especially pre-delinquent youth. While he was in exile and prison, it pained him immensely that he could not continue his work. He urges his friends in Rome not to abandon it.

One sentence of St. Gaspar should be engraved in our hearts: "I urge you not to abandon the poor." There always seem to be reasons for holding back from the difficult mission of serving the poor; it is not easy to see in them the image of God and the suffering Christ. But the Blood of Jesus was shed for each of them. There are no "poor" in the abstract; especially the Church of South America reminds us that, because of the Blood of Jesus, our service for the poor must be a concrete response, just as St. Gaspar's was.

First of all, in the Blood of Jesus we come to the center of our Faith. Study, prayer and meditation are the surest means to understand best what the spirituality of the Precious Blood means for our life. As in Jesus we discover the whole Trinity, so by our study, prayer and meditation we will discover in the Blood the whole Jesus: his incarnation, his teaching, his suffering and his resurrection. The Blood of Jesus tells us that the strongest force, the strongest power in the world, is love.

Secondly, the Blood of Jesus requires us to witness what our study, prayer and meditation have shown to us.

The spirituality of the Precious Blood assures us that our apostolic endeavors are worthwhile. As Jesus by the redemption embraces the whole world, so the spirituality of the Precious Blood must embrace the whole human being, including his social relations. It is a contradiction to profess Precious Blood spirituality without confessing it. One cannot claim to belong to an Institute or organization which has this spirituality without thereby confessing it, that is, without giving a living witness to it.

Finally, in the light of Karl Rahner's remark that "Christian spirituality of the future will be always a spirituality of adoration," we add that adoration of the Blood brings us securely to that "adoration in spirit and truth" which validates all spirituality.

Having done what we can and all that we can, in this life we will never comprehend fully what the redemption in the Blood of Jesus means for us and for the universe. Its full accomplishment remains still hidden; the redemption in the Blood is a mystery. The nearer we come to realize what yet awaits humanity and the universe, the more we are blinded by the light surrounding the mystery and the greater the mystery itself becomes.

For that, the only worthy answer on our part is: adoration. Many of the Institutes who share in our spirituality have in some form the name "Adorers of the Blood of Jesus" or, if not, they have the practice of adoration of the Blood of Jesus. Among the used words in our prayers is the acknowledgment: "Praise and Glory be to the Blood of Jesus!" In confessing this we already join ourselves in faith to that heavenly choir which praises the mystery unveiled, that choir of which the book of Revelation speaks: "They were countless in number, thousands and tens of thousands, and they all cried out: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and praise'" (Rev. 5: 11-12).

(Fr. Anton Loipfinger, C.P.P.S., "Being Witnesses of the Blood of Christ," Workshop on Precious Blood Spirituality, Rome, 1986)

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