

# Moderator General's Report

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## *Preliminary Remarks*

As I come to the end of my second term as Moderator General, I wish to recap for you the ways in which I have tried to fulfill my duties as Moderator General, concentrating particularly on the period 2001-2007. First I will give a resume of the major activities undertaken by myself and the General Council during this period. Then I will indicate those projects which are still pending. I will then voice my opinion concerning some of the challenges the next Moderator General and his Council need to face.

## **Part One: Activities of the Moderator General and the General Council**

Our Normative Texts state that *“the first duty (of the Moderator General) is to vivify and renew the spirit of the Society, and to promote its expansion. Working in the closest harmony with the other major superiors, he coordinates the whole life of the Society and promotes unity among members and Provinces.”* (C61)

The ministry of the Moderator General, assisted by his Council, is one of keeping before the worldwide Congregation the bigger picture and calling the membership to form a true *communion in our diversity* in the spirit of “the bond of charity.” He promotes the relationships between the various units of the Congregation.

The Moderator General calls the membership to fidelity to our charism and furthers an ongoing reflection on the meaning of our lives and ministry in light of our charism. As one Superior General stated in a conference recently, the Superior General is called to be the “living memory of the charism at the service of mission.”

I will now indicate the means through which much of this animation has been done during these years.

## **Visitations to the Membership/Provincial Assemblies**

*“All major superiors are to visit the residences and members of their jurisdictions at least once during each term of office.”* (S51)

An important aspect of the ministry of the Moderator General is the personal visit to each member, and as far as possible, in the place of his ministry. During these six years I have visited practically every member. These visits afford the Moderator General the opportunity to form a rather thorough picture of the situation of the C.P.P.S. worldwide and an awareness of the unique challenges facing each region.

I will list for the record the visitations made and, where applicable, who accompanied me on these visitations from the General Council. The visitations are listed in chronological order.

- Brazilian Vicariate Oct.31-Nov.16, 2002 (with P. Luís Filipe Cardoso)
- Vicariate of India Feb.19-Mar.13, 2003 (with Fr. Jerry Stack)

- Central American Mission Mar.26-Apr. 22, 2003 (with P. Luís Filipe Cardoso)
- Peruvian Mission Oct.21-Nov.13, 2003 (with P. Francesco Bartoloni)
- Iberian Province Dec. 27-Jan. 21, 2004 (with Fr. Jerry Stack)
- Chilean Vicariate Mar. 9-Apr. 6, 2004 (with Fr. Jerry Stack)
- Province of the Pacific Oct.12-Nov.10, 2004 (with Fr. Robert Schreiter)
- Atlantic Province Feb. 22-Mar.17, 2005 (with P. Luís Filipe Cardoso)
- Teutonic Province May 29-July1, 2005 (Fr. Jerry Stack/Fr. Robert Schreiter)
  
- Kansas City Province July 29-Sep. 27, 2005 (with P.Francesco Bartoloni)
- Italian Province Jan. - May, 2006 (with Fr. Jerry Stack)
- Vicariate of Tanzania Jun. 12-Jul. 10, 2006 (with P.Francesco Bartoloni)
- Cincinnati Province Apr. 4-May 20 and Oct. 4-Nov.15, 2006 (with Fr. Jerry Stack)
  
- Polish Province Sep. 7-Oct. 1, 2006  
Zagreb, Croatia: Dec. 7-10, 2006

After each visitation an *Official Letter* was written to the membership of the particular unit. In these letters I expressed my thoughts and concerns on matters that pertain to the life of the entire community. They were addressed to the membership and were meant for reflection both at the level of the Director and his Council and by the membership at large.

I wish to thank once again the membership and the Provincial, Vicariate, and Mission leadership teams for the warm hospitality shown to all of us during our visits and to the openness with which the membership shared their concerns with us.

I have tried to personally participate in the Electoral Assemblies of all the Provinces and when not able to do so, was represented by one of the General Councilors.

Following the visitation of the Italian Province I also called a special meeting of the Province to discuss the concerns which surfaced during the visitation. This was a three-day special meeting from May 30-June 1, 2006.

These visitations and assemblies were very good opportunities for me to get to know the members better, the dynamics of their relationships, the concerns which most interest them, and their dreams and projects for the future. Praying and celebrating the liturgy together also invites us into deeper communion with God and with one another.

### **The Biennial Meeting of Major Superiors**

*“Working in the closest harmony with the other major superiors, he (the Moderator General) coordinates the whole life of the Society and promotes unity among members and Provinces.” (C61)*

*“The Moderator General and his Council are aided by the Provincial and Vicariate Directors. They are to meet at least biennially in one or the other Province, to share their experience and discuss questions that pertain to the whole Society. The mission directors also participate in these meetings with consultative voice.” (S36)*

These biennial meetings have served us as an invaluable means of growing together in a sense of being a truly international congregation and have helped us to grow in our understanding of how the C.P.P.S. is living its mission in the diversity of cultures which configure the C.P.P.S. worldwide. In order to help the Major Superiors have a first-hand knowledge of our diversity, our meetings were held in different continents each time. During this administrative period (2001-2007), four such meetings were held.

September 21, 2001	Rome	Follow-up to General Assembly & Organization
September 8-14, 2002	Canada	Restructuring and Call for Regional Meetings
April 2005	Poland	Elevation of Polish Province
August 2006	Brazil	Commission Reports, NT Revisions, Preparation for General Assembly, Policy Statements in preparation for XIX General Assembly

### **Regional Meetings**

The Major Superiors meeting in Canada in 2002 proposed Regional Meetings throughout the Congregation to discuss the challenges facing us in the regions and to explore ways in which we might collaboratively respond to these challenges. Five Regions were determined.

I participated in all five Regional Meetings leading up to the **XVIII General Assembly of 2004**. One or more of the General Councilors accompanied me to these meetings. These Assemblies occupied a very significant portion of my time during a ten-month period.

The following Regional Meetings were held:

- |                 |                  |                    |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| • North America | Sep. 22-25, 2003 | Warrenville, IL    |
| • Europe        | Jan. 25-30, 2004 | Rome, Italy        |
| • Africa        | Feb. 3-5, 2004   | Morogoro, Tanzania |
| • Latin America | Mar. 15-19, 2004 | Santiago de Chile  |
| • India         | May 18-21, 2004  | Bangalore, India   |

### **XVIII General Assembly**

The conclusions of each of these Regional Meetings were studied and presented at the XVIII General Assembly, September 13-24, 2004. The number of participants in this Assembly was intentionally broadened to include a significant number of invited guests to give added participation from C.P.P.S. members in the newer units, as well as incorporated students, and representatives of the lay associates/companions.

During that Assembly it was decided that various commissions would be set up:

- *A Commission on International Formation* (cf. Resolution 13.3) with P. Francesco Bartoloni as Chair.

- *An Economic Commission* (cf. Resolution 2) with P. Luís Filipe as Chair.
- *A Commission on Revising the Normative Texts* (cf. Resolutions 5, 12, 13.1, 13.2, 13.4, and 13.5). Fr. Jerome Stack as Chair.
- *Developing a Plan for “Mission”* (cf. Resolution 1)
- *International Center for Precious Blood Spirituality* (Resolution 6) The Moderator General has been in dialogue with the Teutonic Province on establishing this Center in Salzburg, Austria

The results of each commission were shared with the Major Superiors in their meeting in Brazil in August, 2006. I thank the Councilors and all the members of their commissions from the different regions for their time and hard work in gathering the opinions of the membership at large and for formulating some proposals for our further consideration.

### **Special attention to new foundations**

One of the responsibilities of the Moderator General is to be concerned with the expansion of the Congregation (cf C61). I was happy to see the elevation of our presence in Poland to that of Province (2005), the elevation of the Indian Vicariate (2003) and the establishment of the Mission in Vietnam (2007). The Congregation is also establishing its presence in Colombia, Mexico, and Guiné-Bissau. During my term in office I have tried to dedicate special attention to our new foundations, given the special challenges they face in planting the roots of the C.PP.S. in new cultures and situations. The members of these units are very appreciative of this support and welcome the visits and contacts of members from other units.

- Colombia 2004, 2005, 2006
- Guiné Bissau Jan. 2005 and Mar. 2007 (P. Luís Filipe Cardoso)
- Mexico April 2006
- Vietnam Mission Feb. 2004 and Jan. 2007

### **International Workshops**

*“As a means of fostering both our internationalization and collaboration within the larger Precious Blood family, we propose gatherings bringing together the Missionaries, Precious Blood sisters, and lay associates around common apostolates...(so as to) learn from each other and come to understand better how our spirituality grows out of and shapes our ministry.”* (XVI General Assembly, Proposal # 2)

*“We propose that a program be initiated that brings newer members together, especially those recently incorporated...to reflect together on the C.PP.S. as an international community. We encourage also the continuation of meetings bringing together formators of the Society on various levels.”* (XVI General Assembly, Proposal # 3)

International Workshops were a central activity of the present General Leadership Team. The Workshops listed here were sponsored and organized by the General Council, with the exception of the Brothers’ Symposium which was organized by the Cincinnati Province with our support.

- Formators’ Course (Rome and Giano) – June 30-August 2, 2003

- International Retreat for English-Speaking C.PP.S. Members (Giano) preached by Fr. Joe Nassal, C.PP.S. – July 11-17, 2004
- Workshop for Recently Incorporated Brothers and Priests (Giano) – July 8-17, 2005
- Brothers' Symposium (Cincinnati) – July 24-28, 2006
- MERLAP II (Rome) – June 13-22, 2007

While each of these Workshops was met with enthusiasm and a good level of participation and representation of the International C.PP.S., more consideration needs to be given to discover the means by which the experiences and contents of these meetings can be shared with a broader audience.

### **Communications**

*“The bond of charity is fostered among the members by the sharing of communications which deepen the sense of community-consciousness and identity and help the individual members realize they form one family through community.” (C10)*

### **C.PP.S. Web Site**

Our international C.PP.S. website ([www.mission-preciousblood.org](http://www.mission-preciousblood.org)) was created in 2001 with the expert assistance of Juan Acuña, an industrial/civil engineer, and a graduate of our St. Gaspar School in Santiago, Chile. Our General Secretary, Fr. Jerome Stack, is the webmaster for the site and has maintained a first-rate web site, updated usually every week.

The site

- is a center for documentation and research on the central themes of our CPPS identity.
- offers News Updates concerning events of interest occurring in the different Provinces, Vicariates, and Missions.
- provides day-to-day coverage of our international gatherings.
- eventually, offers a forum for discussion of issues of interest.
- is a central reference point for connecting the links to all the segments of the community, as well as with the lay associates and women's congregations.
- provides a central international C.PP.S. Directory of membership.

As a society of apostolic life we *“dedicate ourselves to the service of the Church through the apostolic and missionary activity of the ministry of the word.” (C3)* We need to examine more seriously how we might use this *modern means* of communication to fulfill our mission of evangelization in today's world.

### **Publications**

*“...the General Curia should become a resource center of information...supplying the membership reports, analysis and evaluation of what is happening in the larger C.PP.S. community and suggesting how we might respond in solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world.” (XVI General Assembly, Proposal # 4)*

***The Cup of the New Covenant***, published twice yearly and in five languages, has had an important impact on the members of the Congregation, creating an organ of communication at the international level which furthers the bonds of brotherhood around the globe. In each issue, members and sometimes students and companions/lay associates were invited to share their experiences of ministry and opinions on various topics of interest to the Congregation. Special emphasis was placed on examining aspects of the three pillars which configure our C.PP.S. Identity: mission, community, and spirituality. This publication has contributed to the building of a “common language” with which we could communicate on some of our basic C.PP.S. themes, while at the same time respecting their diverse cultural expressions.

I would like to thank our General Secretary, Fr. Jerry Stack, for his excellent work in editing this publication.

A total of twelve issues were published:

Issue 11: October, 2001	“Vocations”
Issue 12: April, 2002	“Globalization”
Issue 13: October, 2002	“Building a Culture of Life”
Issue 14: April, 2003	“The Faces of Mary in the Congregation Today”
Issue 14: October, 2003	“The C.PP.S. Charism in Poland and India”
Issue 15: April, 2004	“The Charism of St. Gaspar Today”
Issue 16: October, 2004	“Highlights of the General Assembly: Refounding”
Issue 17: April, 2005	“The Eucharist”
Issue 18: October, 2005	“The Mission House”
Issue 19: April, 2006	“St. Francis Xavier”
Issue 20: October, 2006	“C.PP.S. Brothers”
Issue 21: April, 2007	“Immigrants”

***St. Gaspar: Our Daily Companion*** (Barry Fischer, 2003). A selection of sayings from the Letters of our Founder, organized for each day of the calendar year. The texts appear in Italian, English, and Spanish.

***The Cry of the Blood: the Challenge of Refoundation***. (Barry Fischer, 2004). Published in both Italian and English this book is a collection of reflections centering around the three pillars of our C.PP.S. identity and unveils the many challenges that our modern-day understanding of mission, community, and spirituality pose to our Congregation. It wishes to explore ways in which we might respond to the challenge of living in creative fidelity to our Founder, St. Gaspar.

***C.PP.S. Heritage Books I and II*** (ed. Jerome Stack, 2005-2006).

These two volumes are in response to a request from the 1998 Major Superiors meeting to have some basic manual of C.PP.S. patrimony themes to serve in the formation of our candidates as well as for the ongoing formation of our members. This need was also expressed by the Formators during the Course for Formators in Rome. One volume has already been translated into Spanish and it is our hope that the two volumes will be translated into the other main languages of our Congregation, so that there is some basic formation along some common lines for all of our members and candidates. Once again I thank Fr. Jerry Stack for his patience and expertise in editing these volumes.

## **Activities of Representation by the Moderator General**

As Moderator General I participated in the semi-annual Meetings of Superiors General and was elected to serve on the Executive Committee of the Union of Superiors General from 2004-2006. During that same period I was the representative/coordinator of the Superiors General of the Societies of Apostolic Life.

I was elected by the plenary session of the Union of Superiors General to be one of the ten Superiors General to participate in the Synod of Bishops on the theme of *Eucharist*, in October 2005.

## **Preaching engagements**

During the past six years I responded to several invitations to preach retreats to women religious and to our lay associates/companions of the broader Precious Blood family.

- Retreat to the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood (Mariamhill Sisters) in Kenya and Tanzania (2002), and in the United States (2005)
- Inter-congregational Workshop on Precious Blood Spirituality in Baumgaertle, Germany (2004)
- Retreat to members of the Italian Province (2004) and to the Polish Province (2005)
- Inter-provincial C.P.P.S. retreat in Belleville, IL -- October, 2006
- Retreat to members of the Indian Vicariate – February, 2007
- Retreat to Seminarians' Retreat in Guiné-Bissau, Africa – March, 2007
- Retreats to Companions/Lay Associates:
  - Companion Pilgrimage/Retreat – Italy, May 2005
  - Companion Retreat in Leavenworth, KS – October, 2006
  - Companion Retreat in Maria Stein, OH – October, 2006
  - Companion Pilgrimage/Retreat – Italy, May 2007

## **Activities of the Members of the General Council**

### **Resident Councilors:**

**Fr. Francesco Bartoloni**, Vice-General and First Councilor, participated with me in most of our semi-annual meetings of Union of Superiors General. He is the Procurator for the Congregation. Besides serving as the house economo, he participated in the meetings of JPIC here in Rome and maintains a page on our website on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation themes as well as one on formation.

He worked with the ASCs in preparing the liturgical texts for our new CPPS-ASC Ordo and has presented all the texts to the Congregation for their official approval. Only the texts in German still need to be presented. The texts have been approved in Latin and in Italian.

Fr. Francesco also was the chair for the Commission on Formation, formed after our last General Assembly, to study possibilities for some kind of common formation at the international level. No decisions on this item were reached and it requires more study. Fr. Francesco has been available for several preaching assignments, one to the members of the Italian Province and another in the Tanzanian Vicariate.

**Fr. Jerry Stack, Councilor and General Secretary**, prepares documents and the Acts of the General Council Meetings, the Minutes of the Major Superiors Meeting and of the General Assemblies. He maintains much of the official correspondence of the Generalate. Fr. Jerry has been responsible for maintaining our C.P.P.S. Website and for editing *The Cup of the New Covenant*. He edited the two volumes of our *C.P.P.S. Heritage* books. He is the official notary of the Congregation.

Fr. Jerry was the Chair for the Committee to study the revisions to our *Normative Texts* and guided us through that arduous process. He participates actively in meetings of Secretaries General in Rome. He has also accompanied the ASC Sisters in some days of reflection.

Most recently, Fr. Jerry represented me at the Electoral Assembly in the Kansas City Province in April of this year.

Fr. Jerry has also served as Archivist for the Congregation during these six years and has done extensive work in reorganizing our archives. He has digitalized the data base of our membership and also reorganized our library and made a digitalized listing of all of our holdings. This was a major undertaking and he is to be commended for this contribution. Several C.P.P.S. members and students came to spend time at the Generalate and to assist him in some of this work. A special word of thanks to Fr. Thomas Conway of the Kansas City Province who spent six months helping with the reorganizing of the archives. Frs. Jeff Kirch of the Cincinnati Province, and Georg Wiedemann and Hermann Imminger of the Teutonic Province, spent summer months here as seminarians helping in this project. My thanks to them and to their Provincials for supplying this special service to the Generalate.

Through his work as webmaster of the Generalate Website and editor of *The Cup of the New Covenant*, Fr. Jerry has done much to build and sustain the networks of communication so important for the internationalization of our Congregation.

I would like to thank our two resident Councilors, Fr. Francis and Fr. Jerry, for the hospitality they extend to a wide variety of guests that come to our General House.

#### **Non-resident Councilors:**

**Fr. Robert Schreiter, Councilor.** During this period of government, he held the Chair in Theology at Nijmegen University and continues to be a full-time professor at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Widely known for his numerous speaking engagements throughout the world, his conferences and writings have brought him international recognition as a leading expert on Reconciliation. Fr. Robert's participation in international committees, editorial boards, Caritas Internationalis, and a wide gamut of speaking engagements helped bring international and theological perspective to our work in General Government.



He has accompanied me on some of my visitations. In June of this year, Fr. Robert represented me at the Electoral Assembly of the Teutonic Province where he also gave a morning of reflections on *Reconciliation* to the Province membership.

**Fr. Luis Filipe Cardoso, Councilor and General Economo.** Fr. Luis Filipe is also a non-resident Councilor. He is assistant pastor in Vila Viçosa in Portugal and comes to Rome several times a year for General Council Meetings and has accompanied me on several of my visitations. He chaired the Committee to study the financing of the General Curia which met in Chicago from Nov. 10-12, 2005. Fr. Luis Filipe also participates in our International Gatherings. His youthful outlook and broad range of ministerial activity helped bring the perspective of our younger membership to Council deliberations.

## **Part Two: Pending Projects**

These have been busy years, but nevertheless not all our dreams and projects have been fulfilled. There is still more work to be done!

**Models of Mission.** The last General Assembly called us to a reflection on the theology of mission. Due to so many engagements already programmed we were unable to address this area during the last years of our administration. Nevertheless, it is a mandate that must be fulfilled and should be a major concern of the next leadership team.

There are a variety of **models of mission** operating in our congregation today. Perhaps it is utopian and too ambitious to think that we can have one model for the entire congregation. We need to reflect more on what it means to be missionary today. To accompany this reflection on models of mission, we need to do much more in order to develop *a spirituality for mission*, especially now that more and more of our members are crossing the traditional boundaries and collaborating in other units. This situation will present many challenges both to those entering the culture of others as well as to the host countries.

**USC Statutes Revision.** Resolution 9 of the XVIII General Assembly called for a revision of the Statutes of the Union of the Blood of Christ in view to making the structures more responsive to the present-day reality of our Congregation and of our lay associates. There is a need to revise these Statutes so that the structures reflect the spirit of collaboration and one in which the laity are represented.

An important decision was made in 2001 when the XVII General Assembly approved a revision of our *Normative Texts* stating that Moderator General and his Council may encourage and promote “*other forms of lay association.*” (S12) This was, in my estimation, an important addition to our Statutes, thus permitting new forms and expressions of lay participation in the spirituality to be recognized.

**Financing of the General Curia.** We express a special word of gratitude to the Provincial and Vicariate Treasurers who formed part of the Economic Commission established in 1995 to study the future financing of the General Curia. In view of the

future demographics of the Congregation, they proposed *the creation of the Investment Fund*, approved by the Major Superiors. This new setup, while reducing some of the annual burden of the former system on the Provinces, has also permitted the General Curia to cover our many works of animation. Besides the income contributed to the General Curia from the Investment Funds, we also receive the income from the rent of part of our house to the Missionaries of the Holy Family who have their Generalate here.

The Provincial Treasurers of the Italian, Teutonic, Iberian, Kansas City, Cincinnati and Atlantic Provinces, met in Chicago in October, 2005 in order to re-evaluate the current system of Financing the General Curia. The Treasurers unanimously approved the continuation of the Endowment Fund and made some suggestions for consideration of the Major Superiors. However, the Major Superiors, meeting in Brazil in August, 2006, felt that this needed more study and so the matter will be left in the hands of the new Moderator General and his Council to see how to proceed.

One concern of the Treasurers was that the General Council investigate ways in which to invest its own reserves so as to get a better return on our investments. These investments, built up over the past twenty years and invested with the Vatican Bank (IOR), serve as a security for the General Curia and for any unexpected emergencies or major expenses, without having recourse to the Provinces for additional assistance. This study is still pending and should be taken up by the new leadership team.

**International formation of our candidates.** The committee, whose members were chosen by their Regions, studied Resolution 13.3 of the XVIII General Assembly and made a proposal to the Major Superiors in 2006 for their consideration. The Superiors thought that the issue needed more study before any decision could be made. This is another task for the new leadership team.

**International Center of Precious Blood Spirituality.** The XVIII General Assembly resolved that “*There be established an international center for promoting the spirituality of the Precious Blood, which will coordinate and disseminate the resources of the various units of the Congregation* (Resolution 6).” The Moderator General has been in an ongoing dialogue with the Provincial and Council of the Teutonic Province which has offered the possibility of using part of their Kolleg St. Josef for such a center. The Major Superiors in their meeting in Brazil in August of 2006, unanimously approved the financing of the international center. Further details have been worked out with the Province and preparations are now underway to refurbish the Kolleg for its use by the Province and for the spirituality center in 2008. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Teutonic Province for their invitation to have the center in their Province.

### **Part Three: Looking to the future**

Much of my animation during these 12 years as Moderator General has been dedicated to *stretching the mentalities, structures and frame of reference* of our members. I would like to share with you now some of my concerns as I leave office and indicate from my perspective of 18 years in general leadership some areas which we need to develop more and which will need the attention of our new leadership team.

1. During these years we have explored some of the implications of what it means to be **a Society of Apostolic Life**. It has become familiar for us to speak of the three pillars of our identity: mission, community and spirituality. These are the three principal characteristics of a Society of Apostolic Life. The Congregation needs to continue its discussion on the three pillars in light of our identity as a Society of Apostolic Life, to discover how our Precious Blood Spirituality and community life can better serve mission.

2. I promoted an attitude of **creative fidelity** when focusing on our charism, in an ongoing effort to discern the signs of the times and to search for ways to respond to those challenges from the perspective of our mission within the Church. Living in creative fidelity to our congregational charism calls us to **refounding** which means “to give an answer to the cry of the broken world today in creative fidelity to the charism of our founder St. Gaspar” (Statement of Values #2, XVIII General Assembly, 2004).

Not all have responded favorably to this call. Some members reject outright the idea or are afraid of its implications. Nevertheless I am convinced that this is where religious life is called to be today and that our very future depends on our willingness to be continually refounded. It is a decision for life or death.

3. Implied in the call to refounding is also the call to rediscover **the role of prophecy** in religious life today. Understandably provincials, vicariate and mission directors, spend a great deal of time in administrative duties and problem-solving on a daily basis, and there often remains little time or energy to reflect on prophecy or on the implications of refounding as they face the constant challenge of balancing present commitments (and often with declining numbers and aging membership) and openness to new possibilities in response to the cry of the blood today.

The need to move from a “maintenance model of government” to one of “prophecy” is voiced by a number of our young members and by our candidates in different units. There is a concern that too much time is spent in preserving our institutions and present structures rather than in building a vibrant future for our young members and candidates of today and of tomorrow. We need to be asking ourselves how we might best pull our human and economic resources to live our mission in today’s world.

4. As we look at the reality of our Congregation around the world we are confronted with the **changing demographics** of the Congregation. On the one hand the congregation experiences a rather strong growth in India and Tanzania, while in the older units particularly in Western Europe and North America, our numbers are dwindling and our membership aging. The challenges this brings to us are many.

In our **young and growing foundations** development of local leadership and government structures is needed that permits and encourages the participation of the members. We need to assure their participation in international gatherings so that they become aware that they are part of a larger picture and a broader C.P.P.S. family. How to incarnate in creative fidelity the charism of the Congregation and at the same time be faithful to our CPPS traditions are questions to be faced as we enter new cultures.

As some Vicariates prepare to become Provinces, the question of economic independence arises. Since most of our growth today is in economically poorer countries, is “economic independence” still a valid criterion which needs to be met before becoming a Province? If not, then how would their economic support be provided for? Perhaps we need to explore a kind of economic solidarity in which our material resources are shared among all the units, especially with those most in need. These growing foundations also need to address the issue of how they can discover local resources for financing their mission.

At the same time, our **older and diminishing units** face another set of challenges. What does it mean for the internal life of the community and for ministry when its memberships dwindle and the number of places we serve in a Province is very limited? How does the local community live in such circumstances the three pillars of our identity: mission, community, and spirituality? Does a Province have sufficient number of members to be able to have the needed change-over in positions of leadership and to fulfill the very important ministry of formation for our candidates? Such situations which are occurring now in several of our Provinces should encourage us to greater collaboration and support among us all. Those units which have founded missions must develop a plan for supporting their missions even as their own economic resources diminish.

5. A recurring theme in my reflections, conferences and writings during these years is the invitation to think in broader terms, across our traditional boundaries of provinces, vicariates and missions. It is an invitation to think globally as an international family in which we are all responsible for one another.

We have surely grown a lot over these years in our sense of belonging to an international congregation. One expression of this growing awareness is the **collaboration across the boundaries** of our present units. As we hear the reports of the different units this week, we will realize just how much collaboration is taking place as well as the challenges implied in such collaboration. **Regional gatherings** can be a good instance of promoting dialogue among the membership and collaborative efforts in mission (cf Resolution 5 of XVIII General Assembly). A question that should be asked at all levels of the Congregation and in the Regions is: how can we best pull our human and economic resources to live our mission today?

6. Living in creative fidelity to our founder’s charism is a call to **broaden our understanding of mission**. The XVIII General Assembly moved us a step forward when it declared in the Statement of Values that *“We recognize working for justice, peace, human life, and the integrity of creation is an integral part of the ministry of the Word in a spirituality of the Blood of Christ as an expression of Catholic social teaching.”*(# 11). The Congregation cannot limit itself to what we are doing now or always have done. Prophecy is born on the frontiers among the poor and the abandoned. To hear the cry and to respond to the call of the Blood would expand our understanding of mission. We continue to pray to St. Gaspar: “help us to discern the needs of our times and to discover how to respond to them.”

In practically all my post-visitation I have called the membership to **openness to new ministries**. This call is not always understood by the members who often cannot understand why we talk about beginning new apostolates when we don’t have enough

personnel to maintain the ones we already have. The XVIII General Assembly made a bold Statement when it declared that “*As a Congregation we are ready to respond to the call of the Holy Father to go where no one else would go and to undertake missions which seem unpromising.*” (#12) As Missionaries of the Word where are the *new areopagoi* calling for our presence? What concrete responses are we giving?

7. There is a constant necessity to reflect upon **our understanding of community**. Our members have different understanding of its meaning and bring to community life different expectations. Religious life today has moved away from the understanding of community as simply living under the same roof and following the same schedule to one of a community based on *relationships, dialogue, and participation in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect*. The latter seems to me to be much more in harmony with a *spirituality of the covenant in the Blood of Christ* which we claim to live. We are constantly challenged to promote the building of *hospitable communities* truly open to the other as a way of living in *the bond of charity*.

A particular challenge to us as an international congregation is to discover the prophetic value of community living which is intergenerational, intercultural and international. The very witness of living community in such diversity is in itself mission! To live in such intercultural and international communities requires formation both at the initial and ongoing formation levels.

8. A concern for myself and the members of the General Council has been **the number of members who leave the Congregation**. Many of them are young. This concern is one which is shared by all the Congregations today and has been the subject of two of our semi-annual meetings of the Union of Superiors General. We need to ask ourselves what is happening? Why do some of our young men decide to leave us in their first years of ministry? I realize that the issue is complex, but it is one that we must reflect on. What can we do to better the environment of community in our respective units so as to favor fidelity?

9. Just as there are different models of mission in the congregation there is also a variety of **models of exercising authority**. At times this has been cause of tension and frustration between the Moderator and some superiors. One aspect of my ministry of animation has been to call our leadership to leave behind a hierarchical model of authority to embrace one *servant leadership*, based on the Gospel with Christ as our model. Servant leadership favors accompaniment, listening, creating safe spaces for dialogue and sharing and promotes participation. How can we grow in our understanding and our living this model of authority?

There is also the question of how to **prepare our leadership** and to support our newly elected superiors. More needs to be done to give orientation to those who are elected and new to this ministry. Can something be done on the level of General Leadership? Perhaps a period of orientation could be offered to our newly elected Directors at the Generalate as some Congregations do. During this time procedural matters could be discussed as well as the general guidelines for the Congregation. Above all, a better relationship between the directors and the General Curia can be established to favor more **effective communication** between the General Leadership and the leadership of our Provinces, Vicariates, and Missions.

10. Mention must be made of the need to prepare members to assume **the ministry of formation** of our membership, both the formation of our candidates and the ongoing formation of our members. There seems to be a consensus today in religious life that the initial formation of our candidates and the ongoing formation of our members must be a continuum, or as one theologian described it in a recent Assembly of Superiors General, it must be like a “seamless garment”. If the entire community is not engaged in a permanent formation in our three pillars, then the ground is ripe for conflict and frustrations which can then lead to abandonment and loss of vocation. Our formators must be well prepared to deal with the complex issues of formation in light of our increasing cultural diversity and internationality. Those who minister in formation must be afforded all the preparation necessary in order to fulfill their role.

11. Around the world, the C.P.P.S. has been enriched over the years by the **presence of dedicated lay women and men** who wish to live our charism. This is a sign of the times in which we live. I have been able to witness how many of our communities have been greatly enriched and found new life and purpose in sharing with the laity our C.P.P.S. charism. The recent Meeting of Representatives of Lay Associate Programs (MERLAP II) in Rome was evidence that the Blood of Christ speaks to people today and inspires them to a fuller following of Christ.

While work has obviously been going on in the Provinces, Vicariates, and Missions, we have not done much reflecting on this phenomenon on an international level. Perhaps the time has come for us to examine the question of lay participation and their relationship with us. Could a special General Assembly could be called during the next period of General Government to discuss this important item, with the presence of lay representatives in the Assembly?

Another concern is that we need to encourage the lay associates to develop a “lay spirituality of the Precious Blood,” that is, they need not adopt a “religious style,” but one which inspires their presence in the family, in the workplace, in society. The temptation is for us to transmit to them our “clerical style” and for them to imitate our models of prayer, etc., rather than find their own way as committed laity in the Church, inspired by the spirituality of the Blood of Christ.

12. **The spirituality of the Precious Blood** is a gift for all the Church. There has been a great renewal in the Congregation in this aspect. We have grown over the years from an understanding of Precious Blood in purely devotional terms to discovering it as a spirituality which inspires us in the following of Christ and gives direction and meaning to our lives and commitments. Motivating the members and lay associates/companions in the spirituality has been a centerpiece of animation during my years as Moderator General. We are called to share with one another how we are discovering and living the spirituality and to help others discover this treasure for their own lives.

However, a need around the world is to discover the *connections* between the concept and our everyday lives. Much more needs to be done on this level. The call of the last General Assembly to establish an International Center of Precious Blood Spirituality and Regional Centers of Spirituality is a clear sign of the importance given to this aspect of our identity by the members and lay associates/companions. Hopefully these Centers can eventually offer some practical tools for discovering how to live the spirituality in our everyday lives and commitments.

## ***Conclusion***

As I conclude this Report permit me to express to all of you a word of deep appreciation. I have served in international leadership now for eighteen years, first as General Councilor for six years, and now for twelve years as Moderator General. What I have shared with you here are some of the reflections I make upon the experiences lived during these years in which I have been privileged to serve you.

I thank you for your welcoming and supportive attitude towards me and for your encouragement throughout these years. I have truly been enriched and blessed by you. I also have been challenged by you to grow and to be stretched.

Even though I will be moving on to face new adventures and challenges, I hope to continue to serve you internationally. But I feel it is time to “let go” and I would encourage others to take up the call to leadership on the international level. The next Moderator General will bring his own gifts and talents to his ministry of animation.

I truly am grateful for the achievements over these years and am encouraged by your continued support. I believe that there is a “*a glorious future*” ahead of us that will be made possible by the contributions of each one of us and of every member, be he young or old, healthy or infirm. We are bearers of a priceless treasure which we are called to cherish and to help others discover.

May St. Gaspar continue to walk with us and encourage us in our mission!

*Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S.*  
Moderator General  
Rome, July 16, 2007