

Statement from the Precious Blood Brothers International Symposium

So we tell you what we have seen and heard, that you may be in fellowship with us, and us, with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And we write this that you may have perfect joy. (1 John 1:3,4)

An International Symposium on the C.P.P.S. Brothers was held in the United States, July 24-28, 2006 in fulfillment of Resolution # 8 of the Eighteenth General Assembly. While a more detailed Acta of the symposium will be disseminated throughout the Congregation, the purpose of this brief paper is to articulate the hopes and visions of how we can move into the future with renewed fidelity to our history, our tradition, and our identity as defined in our Normative Texts: **we are a Society of the Apostolic Life with both priest and brother members.**

It is our heartfelt wish to affirm the vocation of the brother within the Congregation. Those gathered at the symposium shared our experiences in community of being blessed by the life witness and work of our brothers. We want all to share in this good news and we commit ourselves to being the heralds of this good news within our Congregation and in the world.

We believe that the vocation of the Precious Blood brother must be affirmed and promoted by each individual member of the Precious Blood family.

We envision many ways that an individual member can be faithful to this imperative and we, the participants in the symposium, will seek to lead by example.

As Missionaries of the Precious Blood we are to be men of prayer who live a healthy community life. We must pray for vocations, not just in a general way, but must pray for **brothers** (priest and lay associates, too) to be called to our Community.

As members of the Community, we must embody an appreciation for the vocation of brothers so that when we invite prospective candidates to the Congregation, we are able and willing to help them discern a vocation as a Precious Blood brother. As those who drink from the one cup, we must recognize and promote the vocation of brother and the vocation as priest as two ministerial and communal calls, equal in dignity and value to the Congregation and the Church.

Precious Blood brothers have a particular role to fulfill in the affirmation of this vocation. They must be willing to tell the story of the joy they feel in their life as a brother. They are essential in the design and implementation of vocation promotion within all units of the Congregation.

We believe that the vocation of the Precious Blood brother must be affirmed and promoted by each unit of the Congregation.

From the time of our foundation by St. Gaspar, we have been a Community of priests and brothers. Yet in the sharing of our current experience at the symposium, we learned that our experience of brothers across the various

units of the congregation is uneven. We believe that each unit of the congregation must affirm and promote the vocation of the Precious Blood brother. Although each unit must begin that renewal effort from the starting points of their unique reality, we see some steps that can be taken.

We would ask the leadership of all units of the Congregation to accept the responsibility of assisting individual members come to a greater understanding and appreciation of the vocation of Precious Blood brother. We need our leaders to facilitate a dialogue within our Community that will help us move forward faithfully as a community of brothers and priests. It is especially important that those in leadership publicly articulate their appreciation for this vocation and that they speak of the Community in ways that are inclusive of all members.

We need resources that tell the history of brother in the Congregation. We need to hear the stories of individual brothers today, stories that are told with a nuanced theology of brotherhood and that describe the formation and ministries of brothers today.

In each of our units, the formation needs of brother candidates must be considered and embraced. In units that do not have experience in brother formation, brothers from other units are available to assist in understanding of the formational needs of these candidates. We recognize that we are one Congregation with many units and we must be willing to share resources in vocation promotion and formation.

The role of a brother within the Community is a dynamic and responsive vocation. We encourage leadership within the units not to limit the ministerial possibilities open to a brother and to promote the participation of brothers in all areas of Congregational life: leadership, leading prayers and preaching in communal gatherings; serving the Congregation as formators, etc.

We believe that the vocation of the Precious Blood brother must be affirmed and promoted by our Congregation as a whole.

During the symposium we remembered and celebrated our identity as a Society of Apostolic Life that is blessed with both priest and brother members. Essential to that celebration was our recognition that our first vocation and identity is to be a Missionary of the Precious Blood. Within the beauty of that vocation, we experience a vocation as brother or priest. Those two ministerial calls are equal in dignity and beauty because they are the members' faithful response to the work of God, who creates each of us and gives us the gifts needed to live our vocational identity with integrity.

We call on the leadership of our Congregation to use its position to continue to build an awareness of the vocation of Precious Blood brothers. We affirm the manner in which the General Curia has encouraged us to understand the primacy of our shared identity as Missionaries of the Precious Blood. We hope that by building on this foundation, they will continue to promote and build awareness of the vocation of Precious Blood brother in *The Cup of the New Covenant* and on the official website of the Congregation.

While we recognize the great importance of cultural differences, we are one Congregation with a shared identity that is articulated within our Normative Texts. It is of grave concern to us that some units of the Congregation do not have brother members. We believe that a unit of the community that does not include brothers is impoverished. They lack the expression of a significant part of our tradition. They lack the challenge and witness of brothers who are often virtuosos in Community life. They lack an important and necessary resource for developing and growing in this pillar of our identity as a Society of Apostolic Life. We hope that the General Curia will continue to assist the various units of the Congregation in realizing St. Gaspar's vision of a community of missionary brothers and priests.

The core of our formation programs must be to assist our candidates to develop a communal identity as Missionaries of the Precious Blood. This core element of our formation program is the foundation for later formation as a priest or brother. This core element would also be a valuable resource as we invite lay associates to join the Precious Blood family.

Finally, we are aware that as a Society of Apostolic Life with priest and brother members, we have been slow to recognize the leadership gifts of our brothers and have never chosen a brother to serve on the General Council of the Congregation. In the discernment process that will culminate in the election of new leadership (at the 2007 General Electoral Assembly), we call upon all the members of the Congregation to allow the Spirit to open our hearts and minds to the gifts of leadership that are found in both brother and priest members.

During the symposium, we gathered in faithful remembrance and dreaming. We are grateful to have participated in this historic gathering and we entrust the work of this week to the grace of God and to the good will of you, our brothers in Community. May God who has begun this good work in us bring it to fulfillment within the grace of our common commitment and fidelity to the vision of St. Gaspar.

Precious Blood Brothers International Symposium
Maria Stein, Ohio USA
July 28, 2006