

Building a Culture of Life in a Globalized World:
A Perspective from a Spirituality of the Blood of Christ

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Introduction

Globalization is a popular topic in social, political, and theological circles. Everyone seems to have something to say about it, whether it be good or bad. Globalization is lived and perceived in different ways depending upon where one is experiencing it. It is much like reading the Gospels. What a difference it makes whether you read the Scriptures while standing on the balcony of a luxurious suburban home or whether your perspective is that from the doorway of a makeshift hut made of cardboard and discarded tin in a shanty town on the edge of the city dump! The poorer countries often view it as a threat of a new type of colonialism and as a phenomenon which produces exclusions and an impoverishment of the poorer. In richer, more developed countries, it is often seen as a promising future for humanity.

Whatever a person's perspective there is no doubt that globalization is a defining phenomenon of the turn of the century. We live in a globalized world and it is within this context that we are challenged to carry out our mission. It is a world filled with wonderful possibilities and looming dangers, with both lights and shadows.

I have been asked to focus my reflections on how the Spirituality of the Blood of Christ contributes *to building a culture of life in this globalized world*. The theme will touch upon some of the key components of Precious Blood Spirituality and how they might influence our mission. Our Spirituality presents us with a perspective from which we view all of reality; it colors our reading of the Scriptures, and is a prism through which we discern our mission.

Blood: A powerful and enduring metaphor

Blood is one of the most powerful of human symbols. It signifies both life and death, health and disease, power and powerlessness. Images of blood and discourse around blood abound. Horrifying images of blood violently shed fill our **television screens** almost daily: from the aftermath of suicide bombing in Jerusalem to the leveled homes of Palestinians in Jenin as women and children pick through the rubble searching for loved ones or in the hope of retrieving some personal possessions. We sit appalled as we watch replays of the collapse of the World Trade Towers, mourning the loss of so many innocent lives, or as our stealth bombers relentlessly bombard the hills and towns of an already devastated Afghanistan.

Blood is also present **in advertising campaigns**: We have seen blood on the posters of the world-famous Italian clothing industry Benetton, famous for their shocking advertising campaigns, which show provocative images, such as a dying AIDS patient or the bloodstained clothes of a Croatian student killed during the recent war, shown displayed alongside the Benetton logo. On the positive side, we are familiar with Red Cross posters appealing for blood donors: *“Give blood, Save lives!”* or, *“My blood, for you”*.

Historically, we recall the campaign of **Hitler** to preserve the purity of the German race in which “blood” played an important propaganda purpose and which culminated in his “Final Solution” to the Jewish question, and the more recent ethnic cleansings perpetrated by **Milosevic** and his collaborators during the War in the Balkans.

Culturally, blood has had a significant presence in the traditions of the Mayan people as well as in some African cultures.

Biologically, blood accompanies the birth of new life and the transition of women to adulthood, as well as in the circumcision of males. It has played a role in sealing pacts of friendship and covenants.

In the history of the Church, especially since the Middle Ages, devotion to the Blood Sheddings of Christ is frequently depicted in paintings and in art works and have inspired Christian devotions,

moving people to conversion and compassion yesterday and today. The Blood of Christ is a frequent theme in the preaching of many modern-day evangelists. It has not lost its importance nor its significance in today's world.

This extremely powerful and suggestive symbol, expressed in a renewed understanding of Precious Blood spirituality, shapes our lives and our ministries. For those of us who live under the banner of the Blood of Christ, it becomes the central unifying force underlying our lives. Blood becomes the lens which helps us to discover the "red threads" interwoven throughout our lives and in the world around us. Through this prism we attempt to decipher the world and give meaning and shape to our experience and to our mission.

An Invitation to Mission: *Evangelium vitae*

Particularly enlightening for our reflection is the Encyclical Letter of John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*. Ever since its publication in 1995, I have been captivated by his use of the term, "cry of the blood" which suggests to me a way of making our spirituality **more concrete and more connected** to our lived experience. To speak of "**the cry of the blood**" (understood as Abel's spilt blood) and "**the call of the Blood**" (that is, the call to mission we discern through Christ's Precious Blood) capture this ambiguous quality of blood and hold in a healthy tension the two aspects of death and life. It also is a way of speaking about the spirituality of the Blood which is understandable for people today.

The Holy Father states his purpose in writing *Evangelium vitae*: "*The present Encyclical is (therefore) meant to be a precise and vigorous reaffirmation of the value of human life and its inviolability, and at the same time a pressing appeal addressed to each and every person, in the name of God: respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life!*" (# 5) He thus seeks to engage the Church in the mission of proclaiming the *Gospel of life* in all the world and to every creature, as a source of hope and joy.

Thus we are engaged in continuing the redemptive mission of Jesus who proclaimed: “*I have come that they may have life and have it to the full*” (John 10:10). In the synagogue of Nazareth he delineated the mission to be undertaken as one of *proclaiming freedom to prisoners, restoring sight to the blind, and granting freedom to the oppressed* (Luke 4:18-19). In other words, he would dedicate his life to removing those obstacles which bind people (internally or externally) and which impede the achievement of fullness of life.

The starting point for building a culture of life is the acknowledgement then that **promoting life is indeed a constituent aspect of our mission**. Today, more than ever, we are called to make a decided option for the gift of life and for the building of a culture of life, as a global project for our world. Certainly, announcing this “Gospel of life” lies at the heart of who we are as persons of the Precious Blood, which speaks of a lifeblood poured out so that all might have life in abundance!

Keepers of the Covenant Bond

As Congregations of the Precious Blood we are to give voice to the victims of oppression and suffering, to be the eyes and ears for our Church and for society, raising the consciousness of all peoples to the cry of the blood which shouts from our bloodstained earth. In this way we respond to the Holy Father’s plea in **Evangelium vitae** to hear the *voice of the blood of Abel* which continues to cry out from generation to generation in ever new and different ways (#10). As people marked by the Blood of the Covenant we could define one aspect of our mission as one of being “keepers/guardians of the Covenant bond,” much like the *go’els* in the ancient Israelite tradition. The *go’el* was that member of the family (the blood relative) who had the mission of caring for the weaker member, protecting their rights and assuring them their place in the covenant community (Leviticus 25).

This concept was eventually projected into the Hebrew’s notion of the Messiah as the one who would come to defend and to rescue the poor and the downtrodden and to liberate the people. In time

Jesus was seen in this light, as savior, redeemer, advocate, elder brother. He made the cause of the poor and the marginalized His own and decidedly put his life on the line for their defense. He eventually shed his blood for his commitment to them.

We, as Christians and as persons consecrated to witnessing to the Blood of Christ, are called to be go'êls in today's globalized world, committed to being the voice of the voiceless and to defend the weaker members of society.

As we look at our globalized world, we ask ourselves: ***Where do we hear the cry of the blood? Where is life being threatened and needs to be defended and promoted?*** In asking ourselves these questions we respond to the invitation of the Holy Father made to the participants of the recent General Assemblies both of the Adorers and of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

In his remarks to the Sisters on July 5, 1999, he highlighted that in the *“present historical context, marked by worrying divisions and inequalities, it is of vital importance that your community become a promoter of conciliatory action and solidarity, taking the side of the defense of life wherever this is threatened and endangered, giving hope where the wounds are deepest, where the rights of the individual are trodden underfoot, where the silent cry of the needy arises.”*

The Holy Father likewise challenged the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in his address to the participants of our General Assembly held last September in Rome. *“I ask you to continue your efforts to build a civilization of life, seeking the protection of all human life, from the life of the unborn to the life of the aged and infirm, and promoting the dignity of every human person, especially the weak and of those deprived of their rightful share of the earth's abundance.”* (Castelgandolfo, September 14, 2001)

In discerning our mission in the world today **we embrace the evangelical option for the poor** as an inherent part of our mission and as an integral aspect of following of Christ as Adorers and Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

During this Symposium we will be reflecting on our mission within the context of our globalized world from many different points of view and lived experiences, and from different cultural perspectives. As we raise our voices to give voice to the cries of the poor and the marginalized, we are also called to **speak God's Word** to our Church and to the society in which we live. I wish to highlight now some of the aspects of *the Word* that I believe we are called to speak in our globalized world, as women and men called and sent by the Blood of Christ, in the service of the **Gospel of Life!**

The First Word: “*You are Precious!*”

The process of economic globalization has made millions of the world's poor even poorer. Some have been pushed over the brink into marginalization and exclusion, destined to live on the garbage dumps of our great metropolis or in the many shanty towns which ring the large Third World cities, where they live deprived often of water, sewage, and the basic necessities for living a dignified life.

As religious women and men, we cannot stand by in silence! While decrying their fate, we are called to announce the uniqueness and preciousness of every human being and to recall the truth that every economic, political, and social system must have *the person* at the center of their concern. The person, in his or her dignity, can never be displaced in order to give center stage to political or to economic programs and interests.

At the heart of Jesus' ministry was the *unconditional and all-inclusive love of God for each person*. It was the great passion of his life. He went about affirming people in their human dignity whether they were lepers, public sinners, tax collectors, or excluded women and children. All who were touched by Jesus were raised to new life and were called to live in the dignity of children of God. Once again, I quote from *Evangelium vitae*: “*The blood of Christ, while it reveals the grandeur of (God's) love, shows how precious (we are) in God's eyes and how priceless the value of (our) 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 Peter 1:18-19).

As I travel the world and catch a glimpse of life in Guinea Bissau, in Tanzania, in the Philippines, in India, in Latin America, and witness the misery and marginalization in which so many are condemned to live, the need to communicate this Good News becomes ever so clear. I recall the words of **Oscar Romero**, Bishop and Martyr, pronounced twenty-four years ago: *“The transcendence which the Church preaches is not one of alienation. Rather it is about penetrating the world of the child, of the poor person, of the dirty, of the sick. It is about going into the shack or the hut, in order to share with them. And from within the womb of this human misery, to transcend it, to elevate and to promote it, saying to the person: **You are not garbage; you are not marginalized. It is precisely to tell (them) the contrary: Your life has great value!**”* (September 23, 1979)

In our consumerist societies in which we are led to believe that our worth depends on wealth, youth, beauty, or physical prowess as measures of genuine humanity, we raise our voices as messengers of the Good News about **the truth of who we are** and of our inherent value which does not depend on any of the above, but on the fact that we bear the imprint of our God as sons and daughters made in God’s image and likeness and that we have been redeemed by the blood of God’s Son! We proclaim the message contained in Psalm 71:14, that *“the blood of the poor is precious in God’s sight.”*

The poor need to be affirmed in their basic worth as human beings and are in desperate need for someone to announce to them that they *“are not garbage”* and that their lives have great value. The very poverty in which they are immersed is a constant threat to their lives.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, a renowned Peruvian theologian, has written: *“Poverty is a premature death when one is discriminated against in his/her workplace, when the rights of women are violated, or when the right to be different is not respected. We have the duty to affirm life. If we rightly denounce arms as a violation of the right to life, we should also denounce poverty as a violation of this same right.”* Indeed

the lives of the poor are endangered by the poverty and at times the misery in which they live, a situation which strips them of their dignity and drains them drop by drop of their very lives.

We are called to be the messengers of love and hope as we stand with the poor, accompanying them in their struggle “to grow from situations which are less human to ones more human,” to use the words of Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*.

The Second Word: “*Cultural Diversity is Beautiful!*”

Globalization also operates in the socio-cultural sphere. Frequent criticism is heard of *cultural imposition* which accompanies the global economic system. Multinational corporations promote a certain kind of consumerist culture, in which standard commodities, promoted by global marketing campaigns, exploit basic material desires and creating similar lifestyles. Critics and protestors decry the imposition of a monocultural world. Multinational companies such as McDonald’s and Coca Cola become easy targets as symbols of this threat. Some even speak of the “Coca-Colanization” and the “McDonaldization” of the world culture!

Sometimes it helps a bit to put things into **historical perspective**. Neither the commercial interchanges nor the cultural influences we experience today are a novelty. I recently discovered a song from one of my favorite folk groups dating back to my high school and college days, *Peter, Paul, and Mary!* The song is entitled “**All Mixed Up**” from their album, “Songs of Conscience and Concern.” In a joyful medley, they sing of how different cultures have contributed to **the English language** as we speak it today. Our language has been enriched by German, Latin, Celtic, and Arabic languages and influences. When singing about **food**, a topic surely dear to all our hearts, they describe how we like Polish sausage, Spanish rice, corn and beans from Native Americans, and who doesn’t enjoy a good Italian pizza washed down by German beer! And finally, they recall how our physical appearance (color of skin, the texture of our hair, etc.) has been influenced by the mixing of races, the results of military conquests and migrations

throughout the centuries. This song from the seventies now sounds like a prophetic statement on our actual situation in an ever-increasing multicultural society. The world has indeed quickly become “all mixed up!” They end their song on **a note of caution**: we must remember that in such “a mixed up world” “what is right for one could be wrong for another!”

The point I want to make is: we should not be too quick to blame everything that happens in our world, whether it be the mixing of cultures, economic globalization, and poverty solely on the shoulders of modern-day globalization. It would be a gross over-simplification. The study of cultures and how they function and are transmitted is complex. And the causes of poverty are many!

What we are called to do is to **keep our eyes focused on the person**. A person cannot be extracted from his/her culture. *Culture is a way of life*. It is a way of being in the world, conveying with it world-views, ways of thinking, judging, acting, and relating to one another, to God and to nature. Just as we are called to defend the life of the individual person, we also need to promote and to defend the different cultures in which they live, because the person’s identity is so closely linked to his or her cultural roots.

We believe in the Incarnation of the Word of God in all the diversity of human experience. We need to seek God in all cultures! A true dialogue of cultures will help all peoples to live the truth of their cultural identity without a sense of cultural superiority. Only in this spirit of dialogue in which we recognize our diversity will our minds be open to mutual acceptance and to genuine collaboration.

The Word we are called to announce in our globalized world is that revealed by Jesus Christ: the revelation of the *basic unity of the human race!* It is to reveal God’s Dream of a world in communion, which is different than a world in uniformity! There is a fundamental call to communion inherent in who we are, as persons made in the image of our Triune God. Our task is to help people discover this truth and to understand that true communion respects diversity.

As we walk in solidarity with the impoverished and marginalized, with the indigenous and peoples of color, we can help them to discover the values of their own culture and their contribution to the rest of the world. Often we need to help them overcome a sort of shame or embarrassment for being who they are! **In Guatemala**, for example, our Missionaries have promoted the indigenous culture through the creation of a **Madonna of the Blood of Christ**, dressed in the indigenous clothes of the Q'eqché people with whom we minister. At first the people were shocked and said: "But, Father, she looks just like us!" They were always used to seeing European statues of Christ and of the Madonna and found it hard to imagine that Mary could identify with *their* culture. For centuries they were made to believe that they were inferior. Our Missionaries, starting with this statue, began a process through which the indigenous discovered and appreciated the many values in their culture and to appropriate with pride their own cultural identity. It is a work of reconciliation, helping them discover and accept the "truth about themselves!" This becomes a very important task as the mass media are constantly bombarding us with images of beauty, youth, physical prowess, and Western values. If one does not have a strong sense of her/his own identity, the temptation is to non-critically appropriate these proposed cultural parameters of others to the detriment of their own.

This same struggle with cultural identity can be seen in **the mass migrations from the countryside to the big industrial cities** in the hopes of bettering their lot. There, "in a foreign land" they face a major cultural transition as they leave behind their moorings in the traditions of predominantly agricultural societies. This phenomenon is readily observable by anyone visiting cities like Lima, Perú, Río de Janeiro, or in Manila. Floods of campesinos and immigrants from throughout Central America work under great duress in institutions which operate in a manner differently than their own in the sweatshops and maquiladoras of multinational corporations. How can we be present to these people who are struggling to survive in a foreign cultural milieu?

We must divest ourselves of any sense of cultural superiority and avoid reducing “cultural appreciation” to expressions of folklore. In order for us to be true promoters of cultural diversity, we ourselves need to acknowledge the truth about where we stand with regard to other cultures. **What are our own prejudices and hidden or overt racisms?** What are the values and the counter-values of my own culture of origin. Only once we have recognized the truth about ourselves, can we enter into authentic dialogue with others and promote the dialogue of cultures.

Another area meriting increasing attention is that of *inter-religious dialogue*. The recent acts of terrorism and war have highlighted the urgency of such a dialogue. Wars are waged against one another, both sides basing their position on beliefs in the same God! One cannot emphasize enough the importance of promoting this dialogue between cultures and religions as a way of working towards the fulfillment of God’s plan for a communion of all humankind and for building a culture of life.

A Third Word: “*All are invited to the Banquet Table!*”

As persons marked by the Blood of Christ, we are called to remind society, our Church, and our own religious communities that the excluded ones of society are not to be forgotten. We become for them a voice which makes their plight heard around the world and in different forums, reminding the world of the basic truths about the human person and about our obligations towards our neighbor. We announce God’s vision for a new world in which all have a place around the banquet table of life.

Exclusion from society and living on the margins of life, is the lot of many of the poor in today’s world. They are too often ignored and easily forgotten. Sometimes like the rich man of the Gospel, we are too busy to see them sitting at our doorstep (Lk 16:19-31), too caught up in our own affairs and projects to hear their cry. Like the priest and the Levite in the Gospel of Luke (10:25-37), we are in a hurry to get to Church, too engrossed in our internal Church affairs or congregational concerns, that we rush by not taking note of, nor stopping to assist, the wounded man or woman lying by the roadside.

In one meeting I attended, a layperson shared with us her experience in a big city. She was sitting on a crowded subway train and noticed from the window that there was a puddle of blood on the platform just where people were exiting. She watched, appalled, as one person after another rushed through the door to exit, stepping into the blood without even noticing it. One could follow their footprints of blood along the platform pavement. What a poignant and graphic symbol of the blindness we often experience in our daily lives.

Christ, the Good Samaritan par excellence, reached out to the marginalized, inviting them into the Circle of God's love! He wined and dined with sinners and touched them with his healing and reconciling love. As the Good Shepherd, he didn't want any of the sheep to be lost.

We are sent in mission to continue what Jesus began, reaching out to the excluded ones of today's world to invite them to take their rightful place at the Banquet Table of Life.

Statistics tell us that *women and children* are among the most marginalized persons today, victims of globalization and increased poverty. Often women for various reasons bear the sole responsibility for the welfare of their children. They also suffer new forms of **economic enslavement**, whether it be through discrimination in favor of male workers, the marginalization of women in unpaid or informal labor, or the exploitation of women in low-wage sweatshop settings.

Women and children are frequently prey **to globalized crime** as well! There is a thriving *sex-trade* which has engendered increasing numbers of *prostitutes*. In Europe we experience the problem of the prostitution rings run by unscrupulous Mafiosi who traffic in women and boys, especially from Eastern Europe. Lured into this "trade" with promises of a job and a better way of life, they practically sell themselves into slavery! Once smuggled into a particular country, they are forced to work as prostitutes in order to repay their owners for this passage to a better life. They often live in slave conditions herded into abandoned warehouses, subjected to inhumane conditions. These victims of crass exploitation find it very difficult to break out of this situation as they have no money, no contacts, and no

legal documentation. There is a blood which cries from the earth! **One wonders what Maria De Mattias would have to say about this and what response would formulate in her heart!**

Also in the field of sex-trade, mention needs to be made to the growing exploitation of young women and men and children through *pornography*. It is a trade made easier and more accessible through the indiscriminate use of the Internet. *Rings of child pornography* and of *pedophilia* have been discovered in several European countries, as well as in the United States.

Once again, we raise our voices to denounce such offenses against human dignity and life, as victims of exploitation and of physical and emotional abuse. How can we help them to break out of their inhuman situation and to aid them in healing the many psychological and physical wounds so that they might claim one day their rightful place in society and at the Banquet Table of life?

Another group whose life is threatened in today's globalized world is that of the *indigenous peoples*. Don Erwin Kräutler, Missionary of the Precious Blood and Bishop of the Prelacy of the Xingú, has been a spokesperson both in Brazil as well as in Europe for the indigenous who struggle to maintain their lands and their culture. I am sure you will be hearing during these days of the efforts of the Adorers in Brazil who raise their voices to decry the many injustices which threaten the lives of the indigenous.

Other *environmental problems*, such as global warming and climate change which threatens all forms of life on our planet, could be described at length.

As women and men inspired for mission by the spirituality of the Blood of Christ, we search for ways to invite the many marginalized peoples today into the circle of life, into the circle of God's love. The image of Jesus on the cross which Maria De Mattias and Gaspar del Bufalo so often called us to contemplate, stands as a poignant reminder that He had come to embrace all humanity with those opened arms. He was nailed to that cross and shed His Precious Blood to bring about that dream and to offer the fullness of life to all peoples, without exception.

Implications and means for living our mission

What are *some implications* for us as we confront our mission of building a culture of life from a perspective of the spirituality of the Blood? And what are some of the *means* at our disposal to aid us in that mission? Let us turn now briefly to some of these implications and means.

CONVERSION is the key to effecting the change of perspective we need. The passage *from experiencing the Precious Blood as a devotion to living a spirituality of the Precious Blood*, remains an ongoing challenge for all of us. To live this spirituality in a globalized world will call us to **break out of our own little worlds so as to think in broader categories** and to discern the cry of the blood in society and around our planet. **To live in solidarity with the worlds' poor** and marginalized means that we hold their interests and points of view at heart in all we do. Our discourse on the option for the poor is many times not followed up by concrete action. **How can we make the poor, those whom society often excludes, the cornerstones of our mission?** One way would be to encourage *a movement of more members to the margins of society*. Another way would be to increase our commitment to *direct service* or to *advocacy* in order to effect systemic change and shape government policies on behalf of those who are economically, educationally, socially, or spiritually disadvantaged

In order to promote respect for cultural diversity demands that we first of all become aware of our own cultural conditioning, with its strengths and its weaknesses, as a step towards our own conversion in working to *overcoming our prejudices and racisms*. For this we need to be provided with the necessary **tools to assess culture**. **Experiences of cultural immersion**, in which we can experience another's culture are to be encouraged, not just in the initial formation but also in our own ongoing formation. As international Congregations we are in an advantageous position to do this sort of cultural exchange.

EDUCATION. We need, first of all, to prepare ourselves in an on-going formation and education on the issues at hand, and then to see how we might raise the consciousness of those with whom we collaborate in mission. And, as religious congregations, we prepare our future members for this mission

and help them grow in sensitivity and commitment concerning the problems and issues which the poor and needy face as they struggle to live in a globalized society.

All of this is necessary if we are to stretch ourselves and to raise our own consciousness, **so that we can hear the cry of the blood and be instruments in making that cry heard by Church and society today.** During this ongoing process of conversion we will be asked to let go of many of our securities and known worlds in order to embrace *the other* in their reality and to walk with them in their struggle to achieve a fuller life. We are called to be missionaries, with missionary feet, and with missionary hearts.

Our Resources

In order to face the challenges of evangelization in our world today, we need to find adequate *resources* to carry out our mission.

The spirituality of the Precious Blood which speaks of life, of reconciliation and covenant, is of course especially suited to the task and responds to the great challenges facing us in our globalized world. Our response to the cry of the blood is the response given in Jesus Christ, namely, His Precious Blood shed so that all would have the fullness of life. **To steep ourselves** ever more in our spirituality **and to share it with the laity** and with the Church can be a very effective aid to raising our awareness of the challenges we face and in discerning an evangelical response. It is imperative that we, as Congregations of the Precious Blood, find ways to share the richness of our spirituality with others. It is an urgent task from which we must not shirk!

The Social Doctrine of the Church is another element from our Catholic tradition which has been too often neglected. Excellent documents abound which instruct Catholics on our obligations within the social realm. We can do much more in order to incorporate these official Church teachings into our regular catechetical instructions, in our adult education programs, and in our homilies and teaching

ministries. Too often this area of concern is left for a group of “social-minded” people to worry about, or to the few members on our Justice and Peace Committees. Many Catholics simply are not instructed in this doctrine. Nevertheless, the Catholic social teaching is an integral part of our Church teaching and becomes particularly important as we attempt to respond to the many challenges we face as we promote a culture of life.

The Internet and Networking. A special word must be said concerning the use of the Internet. The Internet makes possible rapid communication and access to knowledge as never before. This is drawing us into greater solidarity and proximity.

The Holy Father, in his Message for the World Communications Day (May 12, 2002), calls **the Internet a new ‘forum’** understood in the ancient Roman sense as that public space where politics and business were transacted, where religious duties were fulfilled, where much of the social life of the city took place, and where the best and the worst of human nature was on display. It was a crowded and bustling urban space, which both reflected the surrounding culture and created a culture of its own. He goes on to say that “this is no less true of cyberspace, which is as it were a new frontier opening up at the beginning of this new millennium. Like the new frontiers of other times, this one too is full of the interplay of danger and promise, and not without the sense of adventure which marked other great periods of change. For the Church the new world of cyberspace is a summons to the great adventure of using its potential to proclaim the Gospel message.”

This great technological invention is viewed as a positive means for furthering *communion and solidarity*. The Internet can play a very important role for educating ourselves and others concerning the challenges we face when building a culture of life in our globalized world and for discerning together ways to respond, as Christians and as people of the Blood of Christ. It offers many possibilities for *networking* among our congregations and with Christians and peoples of good will around the globe. Through its proper use, we can do much to further causes of justice and solidarity which are essential to

building a true culture of life. With a presence on all five continents it is possible for us to be “the voice of the voiceless.” This fascinating new “forum” has almost limitless potential for enhancing our mission.

Living as a Eucharistic People

The Eucharist is central to a spirituality of the Blood of Christ. It is a celebration of life. We celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ and at the same time celebrate the death and resurrection of the living Body of Christ. Fr. Francisco (Paco) Gil, C.P.P.S., a Spanish missionary working in Guinea Bissau along with the ASCs there, in an article written for the upcoming issue of our Generalate Publication, *The Cup of the New Covenant*, describes **how our stories of life and death are brought to the altar and incorporated into the celebration of the Paschal Mystery**. He recounts how the Adorers and the Missionaries travel sometimes by foot, at other times in canoes or in vehicles, “in order to gather the bitter wine of laments and sufferings” of the people in the small villages under their care. He says, “We listen patiently to their clamor. We take it, we drink of it, and we collect it in our missionary hearts, in the cup of bitterness.

“And then, as the sun sets, and we gather for the Eucharist, at the moment of **the offertory**, we deposit in the chalice all the suffering we have gathered up, and we present it to God as the new cry of Abel’s blood (cf. Gn. 4:9). The cup we offer holds the cry of the blood. Jesus himself, moments later, will echo our denunciation making it his, and he will elevate the tone of our voice. The wine of sorrows is converted into the Precious, Divine Blood, more eloquent than Abel’s blood (cf. Heb 12:24). Later, **during communion**, God who is ever attentive to the cry of the oppressed (cfr. Ex 3:7), will speak to the hearts of the missionaries, and will calm their concerns, will satisfy their anxieties, and will send them back once again to the field of sorrow and slavery with a pledge to be with them always. It is from this eucharistic experience that the missionary will be present in the midst of the people as witnesses of hope, as *sacraments of life*.”

There is no other way to celebrate the Eucharist, than to **“recognize the body”** which is celebrating. St. Paul warns us that we cannot rightfully celebrate the Body and Blood of Christ if we do not “recognize the body,” the living body of God’s people! *“The one who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment on himself”* (I Cor 11:29).

“The Eucharist sends us forth as prophets and ministers of the Word, to announce the Good News, specified in the Spirituality of the Blood, a spirituality of Resurrection and of Covenant. We go forth strengthened in order to struggle with all our force to break the silences which often engulf our people and which silence our hearts and muffle the cries of the blood.”

Each Eucharist that we celebrate is a call to conversion as individuals and as communities. The Lord comes to give sight to our eyes which are often blind; to give hearing to our deaf ears; and to untie the shackles which bind our feet, our hands, and our hearts. Only then, once freed from all that binds us, can we fulfill our mission in today’s globalized world. Only then, when we make heard the cry of the marginalized and when we witness to the gospel values implicit in a culture of life, will we be contributing to the construction of a new world order, more human and more just and one which reflects more faithfully God’s dream for humankind, as revealed by Jesus.

One evening while surfing the internet I came across an article by Katherine Ainger, writing in *Third World Traveler*, in which she describes a meeting of anti-globalization people in Cochabamba, Bolivia. One evening some youth volunteers from **the group, Tinku, staged a cultural show**. The group gathered in the center of the room and played a choppy, driving indigenous rhythm with pipes and drums. She describes the scene in which the participants in the gathering, farmers from Bangladesh, Afro-Colombians, Spanish anarchists, and Bolivian village kids and all the conference participants “hold hands in concentric circles around the musicians, moving in different directions around them. This movement gradually turns to hysterical chaos as gleeful dancers lead their circle under the arms of the outer circle and back again, until everyone is dancing and laughing in a giant, confused tangle.” She observes that

“In this moment, no power on earth seems as strong, as heady as the potential of this combined, diverse humanity.”

At the Eucharistic table the Christian community also gathers together in our cultural diversity to celebrate life and all its potential. *As we drink from the communion cup we enter into communion with God and with one another as we dance to the tune and rhythm of God’s love.* We celebrate life as a gift that we receive with gratitude and responsibility. Offered this sacred gift, we need to receive it, care for it, and nurture its growth, while at the same time committing ourselves to struggle so that everyone can achieve it and enjoy it to the full.

Living as Promoters of Hope

The task before us is enormous and very challenging. We do well to recall the words of the late Catholic activist, Dorothy Day, who once observed that there “remains too much work (to do), to become overwhelmed by hopelessness!” And so we continue to search for ways to accomplish globalization with a conscience, to build the future on the dignity of each human person and of all cultures and to find in that foundation the hope of the world.

As persons of the Precious Blood, we celebrate our mission and renew our commitment in the Eucharist and the revealed Word of God strengthens us in our struggle to overcome what some identify as “the Beast” of today’s world, that is, the embodiment of the negative aspects of globalization. The Book of Revelation presents us with a vision of the final victory, when the Beast will be overcome and the demons expelled, and a new world order dawns. It is the vision described in the 14th chapter in which the key figure is **the Lamb** (Revelation 14:1-3). This vision reminds us that the resurrection of Christ is present in the history of the world and that ours is a time of grace, a *kairos*, in which it is possible to build the Reign of God beginning in the here and now. **It is the vision of the victorious Lamb and of the international group of the redeemed who had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.**

Visions such as this from the Book of Revelation inspired Maria De Mattias in her *Thanksgiving*

Prayer for the Redeemed:

**“You sent Jesus into this world
that he might free humanity from the power of evil
and redeem the world in his precious blood.**

**All who have washed their robes, their hands, their lives,
in the blood of the Lamb
will follow Jesus and share in eternal glory.”**

That vision holds out to us the promise of the New Jerusalem, of a new world order, and spurs us on in our mission to *respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life*. Let us go forth as people of hope committed to building a culture of life in the Blood of the Lamb.