

Witnesses to the Blood of Christ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For that, the only worthy answer on our part is: adoration. Many of the Institutes who share in our spirituality have in some form the name "Adorers of the Blood of Jesus" or, if not, they have the practice of adoration of the Blood of Jesus. Among the used words in our prayers is the acknowledgment: "Praise and Glory be to the Blood of Jesus!" In

confessing this we already join ourselves in faith to that heavenly choir which praises the mystery unveiled, that choir of which the book of Revelation speaks: "They were countless in number, thousands and tens of thousands, and they all cried out: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and praise' " (Rev. 5: 11-12).

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