

## 5. Community Identity

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

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

I think a spirituality of the Precious Blood is a most obvious choice for all of us. There are many different ways of relating to God, many different spiritualities. We can't use all of them. I think the challenge for us is to use our ministry and apostolates as a source of continuing reflection on the mystery of the Blood in our lives. The challenge for us, is to help people realize in their own struggles and sufferings that the cup of suffering can become the cup of salvation, and the blood of suffering and death can be sacrificed, made holy, to become the blood of resurrection and life.

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

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

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

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

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

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