

# The Cup of the New Covenant

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD  
No. 31 - October 2011

## Preaching in the Light of the Spirituality of the Blood of Christ

by Fr. Francesco Bartoloni, C.P.P.S.

In May the International Center of Precious Blood Spirituality held a workshop on the theme of preaching from the perspective of the spirituality of the Blood of Christ. Members of three of the Precious Blood Families participated: the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ and the Sisters of the Precious Blood of Mother Anna Maria Brunner (Dayton C.P.P.S.). For all three of these institutes evangelization and proclaiming the Word of God express the core of their ministry.

In this edition of *The Cup* we wanted to synthesize the results of this workshop. We are well aware that evangelization comprises an important and

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Participants who met in Salzburg

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## Proclaiming the Message of the Precious Blood In the light of Jesus, the Preacher

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### INTRODUCTION

In the first part of this presentation I will attempt to answer these three questions: What did Jesus preach? How did He preach? Whom did He preach to?

Then in the second part, I try to apply some of this to our mission of communicating the message of the Blood of Christ in our varied apostolates.

### WHAT DID JESUS PREACH? THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH

(John 1,1-18)

In the Prologue of John's Gospel we read, "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." It is here, in the mystery of the incarnation where any reflection on preaching the Word of God must begin.

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The entirety of Jesus' life, his teaching, his miracles, his way of interacting with others, his gestures, all speak to us of God's love. All of it comprises revelation, the Word God has spoken to us.

It is important to note not just what God has revealed to us in Jesus, but *how* that revelation takes place. The post Synod Apostolic Exhortation, *Verbum Domini*, states that: "The mystery of the incarnation reminds us that God, on His side, always communicates Himself in a concrete story, taking up the cultural codes written in that history, but, on the other hand, the very Word can and should be

listener a liberating force which is capable of moving the person from where he/she is, to discover how they could be, as they strive to reach their full potential. A good example of this is the encounter of Zacchaeus and Jesus who lunched together, to the surprise of everyone (cfr. Luke 19:1-10).

People were first touched by Jesus' love which was unconditional and abundant. Love and acceptance was a gift! It would then be the acceptance of that gift which would call the person to want to respond.

Jesus spoke the Truth even when that truth was challenging. A clear example of this is His "Bread of Life Discour-

his voice. He was a man in tune with his culture. He spoke to the people, using their language and images which reflected realities they could relate to, like fishing or farming or tending the sheep, or speaking as a young man in the Temple with the Scribes and Pharisees (Lk. 2:46-49). The Gospels provide abundant evidence of this.

### HE SPOKE WITH AUTHORITY

Jesus communicated simply and with clarity what He heard from the Father, but his communication was not limited to moments of specific preaching. His Words were backed up with deeds. The Gospels are full of miracle stories in which Jesus expresses in deeds the love He has come to reveal. "Jesus did not preach as the scribes and the Pharisees, but he lived what he preached."

### HE READ THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES IN LIGHT OF THE SCRIPTURES

During the Easter Season we read and meditate on the wonderful story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (cfr. Luke 24).

The disciples, downcast and disappointed, at what they felt at the moment as the end of the wonderful dream they had lived when Jesus walked among them, were on their way back home apparently to take up where they had left off, when Jesus had called them to follow him.

While on that journey Jesus appeared and walked with them and entered into a dialogue about what had happened in Jerusalem. In the pursuing dialogue, Jesus "read the signs of the times" with the disciples in light of the Sacred Scriptures, and their eyes were opened and they came to an understanding and discovered a deeper meaning in the events they had previously experienced.

### TO WHOM DID JESUS PREACH? HE MET THE PEOPLE WHERE THEY WERE

Jesus takes up a dialogue with the Samaritan woman at the well. He begins the dialogue, accepting her where she is in order to progressively help her discover the truth about herself. He engages her in a constructive dialogue through which she herself would discover what is happening to her, what were her deepest desires.

As in many situations, Jesus communicates with people where they are, in their concrete situations, whether that be with regard their social status,

## UPCOMING EVENTS

# MERLAP III

*(Meeting of Representatives from Lay Associate Programs)*

*July 23-27, 2012  
Rome*

**The representatives for this meeting will be chosen by the unit superiors**

transmitted in different cultures, transforming them from within, through what Pope Paul VI called, the evangelization of culture." (#114)

### JESUS COMMUNICATED WHAT HE HEARD FROM THE FATHER

It is important also to emphasize the source of his preaching. On different occasions Jesus mentioned that he was communicating what he had heard from the Father (cfr. John 8:25-30). His intimate communication with the Father is the wellspring from which his preaching is nourished.

### HE ANNOUNCED THE GOOD NEWS

The content of Jesus' preaching was the *Good News* that the Reign of God was among them, revealing through His words and deeds the dream God has for humanity.

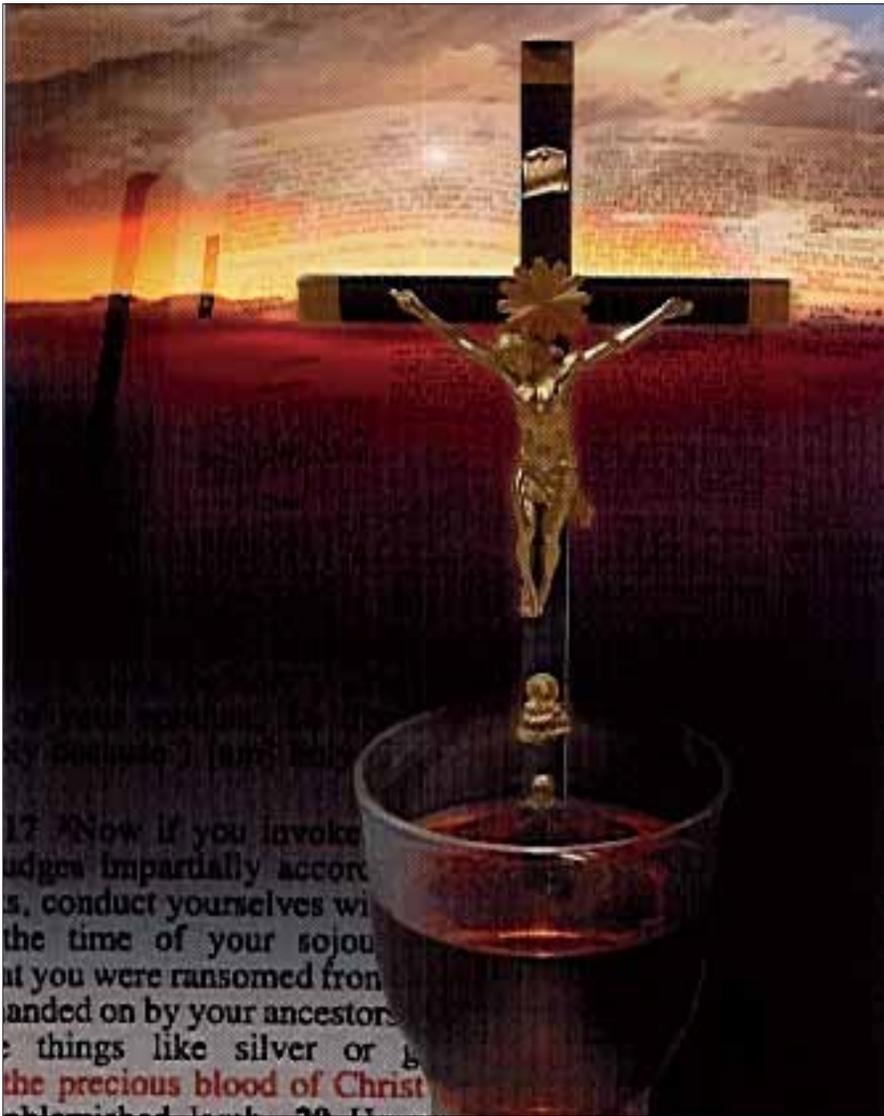
He does not moralize, he does not reprimand (except the Pharisees because of their hypocrisy). He releases in the

se" in John's gospel in which he states and then restates the need to "eat His flesh and drink His blood" if we are to have eternal life (cfr. John 6:22-71).

In the tradition of the prophets, on the one hand he announced the coming of the Reign of God, and on the other hand he denounced all that would impede that coming. He spoke the Truth even at the risk of losing some of his followers. And he would eventually pay the price for speaking the truth, with his own death.

### HOW DID JESUS PREACH? HE SPOKE IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE

Jesus is one of us and shares our humanity. Particularly important to us is his way of relating to the people, with those suffering for whatever reason, with those nearby and those far away, with sinners and just ones, with the great and the small, with the poor and the rich, whether at home or on the road. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep and the sheep know



Poster Design by Fr. Dennis Christz, C.P.P.S.

responding to a particular need (Matthew 15:32-39, feeding the hungry), or to a cry for help (cfr. Matthew 20:29-34, the healing of the two blind men).

### HE CROSSED FRONTIERS TO REACH OUT TO THOSE IN NEED

The law of Incarnation tells us that Jesus, in his humanness, grew “in wisdom, age, and grace” and his understanding of mission also developed as a process. In several passages of the New Testament we see Jesus being challenged and stretched in his understanding of ministry. It was women who often called him to broaden his mentality and understanding of mission (cf. Mark 7:24-30).

### HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO HOW WE COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD?

A spirituality of the Blood of Jesus is incarnational, concrete, and rooted in reality. It speaks to the world in which we

live, since it offers a way of responding to our deepest yearnings and struggles.

In order to communicate our spirituality we need to be doubly rooted: in the Word of God and in reality.

### STEEPED IN THE WORD OF GOD

As Jesus communicated the Word he received from the Father, we do not announce our own word, but The Word which we have received in our hearts and incarnated in our lives, through our personal and communal reflection on God’s Word as revealed in Jesus Christ. What we wish to communicate must flow from our own personal encounter with Christ, the Word made flesh, in our own life.

Like all other Christians we are called to proclaim the message of God’s love through word and deed. But as “peoples of the Blood of Christ” we have been entrusted through our congregational charism approved and recognized by the Church, the mystery of the Precious Blood. We have a treasure to be shared for the enrichment of all.

To do so, we need to be steeped in those Scriptural texts which speak directly or indirectly of the Blood of Christ: the covenant, reconciliation, the Eucharist (the Cup), human dignity, justice and peace, redemptive suffering, solidarity and hope.

### KNOWLEDGE OF THE PEOPLE AND OF THEIR REALITY

In the post Synod Apostolic Exhortation, *Verbum Domini*, it states that the Synod Assembly exhorted us to always have before us the questions: “What do the readings say? What do they say to me personally? What should I say to the community, keeping in mind their concrete situation?” (# 59)

These are good questions for us to ask as well when we seek to discover how to communicate the message of the Blood of Christ. We begin with the texts themselves, then we ask what these say to me personally, and then how do these texts speak to the concrete situations in which we live.

Or, the opposite can also be true. We begin with the situation in which our audience finds itself, since the proclamation is proposed as an answer to a question, a question which is born from the situation the person or a determined group is living.

Thus, the proclamation of the message of the Precious Blood does not ever take on a identical face, but rather is responds according to the situation and the diversity of the audience. In the Center of Reconciliation in Chicago, certain aspects of the spirituality of the Blood will be emphasized, whereas in a post-dictatorial country following a bloody coupe and political oppression, we speak of reconciliation in one way; if we are working with a group of married couples who are in need of building bridges of dialogue or of repairing relationships and of renewing their covenant bond, we announce other aspects of the blood of reconciliation and covenant. And so we speak about other elements essential to our spirituality.

If the Word of God is to touch people’s lives and help them find meaning in what they are experiencing, then we need to find ways to express and to announce the message which speaks to that particular situation and responds to the search for meaning in our everyday life experiences.

**IN A LANGUAGE THAT IS UNDERSTOOD**

We need to adopt God’s method of communicating. We need to discover what language to use today in order to express the richness of our spirituality. Through the challenges of the times in which we live, new aspects may be discovered or reinterpreted for our times. We need to tap the resources not only of our theologians, but also of our musicians and poets and artists, as well as our technologically gifted members and lay associates.

**“In a sense our experiences and stories become like modern-day parables which point to God’s truth and which mediate God’s Word.”**

People can be scared away from our spirituality at the very mention of blood! We need to discover the meaning behind the Precious Blood and communicate its meaning in a language which engages peoples in the reality of their everyday lives.

**A CLEAR PERSONAL IDENTITY**

As communicators of the message of the Blood of Christ, we continually need to nourish our core identity as “Christian men and women entrusted with the spirituality of the Precious Blood.” If we have not developed a personal identity grounded in Christ who shed His Blood for us, how will we communicate the Gospel of the Blood with conviction?

Jesus spoke more to the heart than to the heads of those He encountered (cfr. I Cor:2,1-5). To proclaim the Gospel is not about making a theological exegesis, or proclaiming a doctrine, but rather *communicating an experience*. To live our Christian faith is to *follow Christ*, it is about discipleship. When we announce the Gospel and the message of the Precious Blood, we need to discover how living our spirituality is a way of following Christ as His disciples.

I have discovered time and time again that people connect to stories about how God has worked in our own life through concrete situations. By breaking open the bread of our own life’s journey and showing how God was and is working in that journey, other people can better get in touch with their own life stories and discover how

God is working in them. The emphasis, however, is on what God has done and the miracles He has worked. Thus in a sense our experiences and stories become like modern-day parables which point to God’s truth and which mediate God’s Word.

**WE DO THE WORKS OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD**

When we speak of proclaiming and communicating the message of the Precious Blood, we need to remember that the Word is not always proclaimed explicitly. The questioning

and search for meaning sometimes is sown in another’s heart through the witness of our lives which reflects the works of the Precious Blood, such as reconciliation and peace-making, community building, promotion of human dignity, the defense of life from conception to the grave, through being persons of hope and solidarity, by reflecting in our lives the compassionate face of God, etc.

We must always ask ourselves the question: “How am I living and giving witness to the Blood of Christ of which I preach? Am I a peace-builder? Do I affirm the dignity of those with whom I come in contact? How do I reflect the compassionate face of God? Am I in solidarity with the poor and downtrodden? Do I give of myself (my talents, my time, etc) unselfishly to respond to the needs of others?”

**BEING STRETCHED BY THE CALL OF THE BLOOD**

Much has been said about responding to the cry of the blood. In fact, I have often said that if we hear the cry of the blood and let ourselves be questioned and challenged by it, we will be stretched to go beyond the confines of our known and comfortable worlds, just as Jesus was stretched by his encounters with “Others”.

Not only are we concerned about responding to the needs and cries of the people in our parish community, catechetical groups, youth groups, confirmation classes, etc but we need to go “outside the circle”, “outside the gates of our worlds” to respond to those cries wherever they may be heard. We will

be called to a journey of compassion and solidarity.

Bruno Maggioni, in his book entitled, *The priest as a man of the Word*, states that Jesus above all encountered the people along the road and in the villages. He didn’t put emphasis on the sacred places, sacred themes, sacred gestures. To the contrary, he shifted the attention from the sacred gestures to *relationships*, from the sanctuary to *His Body*, from the temple of stone to *the community*, from the sacred to *life*, from the great buildings (Mk 13) to *the least of our brothers and sisters* (Mt 25).

The Reign of God which was at the heart of Jesus’ teaching was one in which all would be invited to sit at the banquet table. Jesus himself proclaimed that when He would be raised up from the earth, He would attract all to Himself. The Reign of God is missionary by its very essence.

In the “book of the Cross” we discover what Pope Benedict has called the most extreme example of God’s love for us. When contemplating His arms outstretched and his Open Heart, we discover our mission to reach out to embrace all peoples in God’s love and to create in our own lives, in community, and in our ministry those “safe places” where others can be in an atmosphere of love and respect.

We ask ourselves: Where would Gaspar be preaching today? Where would Maria De Mattias and Maria Anna Brunner commit themselves in our society in these days? What are the new “areopaghi” which demand our presence? What are the modern means for communicating the message of the redeeming Blood of Christ today? How are we using those means?

We renew our commitment to be messengers of the Precious Blood at the Eucharistic Table. We renew there our covenant commitment with God and with one another, and we are sent forth to live what we have celebrated, to be that living Word of God’s love, messengers of Christ’s redeeming love for all.

We pray to St. Gaspar: “Help us to discern how we are to live and promote the message of the Gospel. United with you, may our hearts have compassion for the poor, the oppressed, and the abandoned. Increase our love for the Blood of Christ.”

May our missionary zeal be rekindled in our hearts and may we proclaim with joy and enthusiasm, “the Good News of the Precious Blood.” ♦

# HOW DID ST. GASPAR PREACH?

by Fr. Willi Klein, C.P.P.S.

In order to find out how our founder had preached, I looked up four of the most important witnesses, Biagio Valentini, Giovanni Merlini, Francesco Amici, and Bartolomeo Panzini. The first two were some of his earliest companions and succeeded him directly as leaders of the congregation. Amici was a famous homilist and Panzini a lay brother who accompanied Gaspar for 17 years. They all had often listened to his sermons during the missions. Some further information was found in his letters.

Normally Gaspar's sermons were held during a village or town mission of several days, or a course of spiritual exercises, a triduum, a novena, or during a special time of the liturgical year. His favorite way of preaching was the so called "folk (popular) mission." His great examples were the Jesuits Segneri and Pinamonti, Balducci, Francesco di Girolamo, and of a later period, Alfonso di Liguori and Leonardo di Porto Maurizio, Filippo Neri and Giovanni Battista de Rossi. For Gaspar the mission was "... an exceptional grace of God, and, by means of its ministers and preachers, a very special gift offered by the Lord to believers, a powerful summons, a privileged occasion to take one's own life in hand and imprint a new direction on it, to be converted. On account of this, following the path of traditional missionary spirituality, del Bufalo thought of the mission as a struggle, a military campaign, a hard battle fought to snatch souls from evil and to set them firmly on the way to salvation, sanctification and a truly lived Christianity<sup>1</sup>."

Gaspar untiringly preached one mission after the other, so that none of the missionaries could keep up with him – as Fr. Merlini remarked. But he admonished others to watch their health: "How is your health?; Please do not over exert yourself preaching; have somebody read out of the book of Can. Calamita. God accepts our good intentions. To tell the truth, I am very concerned about your health<sup>2</sup>," and "Take care of yourself, put on a bit of weight, and do not preach with so much effort<sup>3</sup>."

A complete change and a new beginning were the aim of all his activity. In order to reach the hearts of his audience more was needed than words. Symbols were used, impressive ceremonies, processions, dramatizations and surprises calculated for effect. The listeners should be able to grasp this experience of Providence with both their hands. Moreover, Gaspar had inherited the lively imagination and the temperament of his father. But he modified the traditional mission that had sometimes deteriorated into a spectacle, a kind of pious entertainment. He arranged it more soberly and more effectively.

Turning back, which meant making a good confession, and a new beginning were the aims of his sermons, the core of his evangelization.

Mario Spinelli writes: "With the beginning of his missionary activity, then, the oratorical prowess of Gaspar displayed itself fully. It was strengthened and honed by maturity and experience, by culture and in-

terior progress, by apostolic labors and by a thousand stimuli offered, every day, by pastoral labors and encounters with people... he emphasized a greater sobriety and essentiality.

He emphasized a denser doctrinal layer and a stronger cohesion with real life as a sign of a simplicity, a relevance and an affective warmth... In sum, more than an orator, there on the platform or in the pulpit, he was a witness, an apostle who spent himself for his brethren, even preaching ten or fifteen times a day be it under the blazing sun or in pelting rain and, sometimes, going out without a voice, with his clothing soaked with sweat<sup>4</sup>!"

Well, how did St. Gaspar preach? My presentation consists of three main parts: First I'll sketch with simple strokes his way of preaching, then a few words about the training and preparation for the service, and finally



St. Gaspar Statue in Giano

some witnesses of his time will speak. (This third part is here omitted because of lack of space).

Examining the sources I noticed ten distinctive features – two extraordinary ones and eight general ones. The first extraordinary characteristic was called “the gift of the word” – mean-

church. He discriminates clearly between demand and advice and avoids in his sermons topics that cause discussions in the church.

3. Gaspar often illustrates his topics with examples taken from the daily life of his audience or from the lives of the saints, but his illustrations are never dull or superficial.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

*Il Sangue di Cristo nella Bibbia, V. Commento dei Padri della Chiesa, Vangelo secondo Matteo e Vangelo secondo Marco*, edited by Tullio Veglianti, C.P.P.S., Centro Studi Sanguis Christi, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City (2011).

*Patrimonio C.P.P.S. II: Comunidad, Misión, Espiritualidad (in Spanish)*, original published in English by the General Curia and edited by Jerome Stack, C.P.P.S., Messenger Press, Carthagen, Ohio, 2006. The Spanish translation can be found on the C.P.P.S. website ([www.mission-preciousblood.org](http://www.mission-preciousblood.org)) in the documents section.

**If you are interested in these publications, please contact the Generalate.**

ing a special gift of the Holy Spirit. By this gift Gaspar was generally presented with new inspiration while preaching and his audience noticed that he taught new thoughts in a creative way. The other exceptional feature was his memory. Like Mozart in music Gaspar was able to reproduce a sermon word by word after one hearing. He was able to quote by heart the Old and New Testament, the psalms, texts of the Early Fathers and other spiritual writers.

These are the further – “normal” characteristics of his preaching:

1. He often uses quotations from the Bible or the Early Fathers as a starting point and explains the topic or he confirms the theme with such a quotation. That was a new way of preaching, for many preachers of his time cultivated a more allegorical and descriptive style.
2. He stresses the importance of a lucid, philosophically and theologically founded argumentation. Thus he refutes the widely known errors of sectarians and enemies of the

4. He avoids harsh, frightening speeches and when he notices that his listeners are frightened he usually adds: “We have always to think well of God.”

5. Gaspar doesn’t hesitate to show his personal feelings – not in an artificial way but as the true expression of his own feelings. Thus the hearts of his listeners are moved.

6. More than with his voice, which was rather weak, he impressed with his gestures and the objects that he showed, specially the crucified Christ. Thus even illiterate persons can understand him well. But there is nothing exaggerated, his looks and behavior are noble and true.

7. He adapts his noticeable eloquence to the ability of his audience – whether it is the population of a mountain village, a group of lawyers or the clergy of a town.

8. The listeners are always aware of the respect with which he talks to them, his voice, his gestures or expressions are never offensive.

Now let’s see how Gaspar prepared his sermons.

Point one: All his life he read, meditated and studied the Bible, spiritual writers and famous preachers. Second point: prayer played part in his preparation. Normally he would jot down some keywords, then pray and afterwards complete his sentences. In the general archive of our congregation there are 514 sketches for sermons on about 300 different topics. He wrote sketches for himself or for a missionary or dictated them. Certainly many of these sketches got lost.

In a letter Gaspar writes: “Our practice of giving Missions and Retreats makes it clear that whoever does not wish to apply himself to the study of preaching should not consider joining this institute, nor would the Institute admit him<sup>5</sup>.”

To Cardinal Bellisario Cristaldi, the promoter and benefactor of the congregation, he writes: “Then, too, there is always the continuous task of working on so-called preaching materials<sup>6</sup>.” He admonishes Fr. Marcellino Brandimarte: “Above all, prepare well everything that you preach, since the most lovable God merits being served with fidelity and exactitude. Give there an edifying example, as I have no doubt you will do<sup>7</sup>.”

Gaspar attached great importance on the study of homiletics for the *candidates in formation*. Full of joy he writes to the archbishop of Camerino, Msgr. Nicola Mattei: “The Holy Father is quite pleased with the idea of a Boarding School at S. Felice di Giano, for those who, having already completed their Seminary studies, will now prepare themselves for the preaching ministry<sup>8</sup>,” and he informs Pope Gregory XVI: “In the field of oratory, the young men are given training in the basics of preaching, following the pattern that is so laudably practiced by other sacred Institutes and especially by the Fathers of the Company of Jesus<sup>9</sup>.”

The new priest and confrere, Fr. Orazio Bracaglia, was attentively and tactfully accompanied by Gaspar. He writes to him: “With regard to preaching, let me know whether your voice is up to preaching; or whether, because of

# Workshop Highlights



"The sharing of experiences, so rich and varied, revealed to me the richness of our charism and its versatility, according to the various realities and contexts. The spirit of brotherhood and the spirit of prayer lived in these days was very positive."

*Fr. Lucas Rodríguez, CPP.S. (General Curia)*



"The days spent at the Spirituality Center were refreshing, a time of renewal, of freedom and of reconciliation. I was filled with greater enthusiasm and joy for belonging to the "Precious Blood Community". Something happened which transformed me interiorly. It was quality time for sharing our life. When I returned home I felt different, serene, and very much at peace."

*Fr. Luis Manuel Cardoso, CPP.S. (Portugal)*

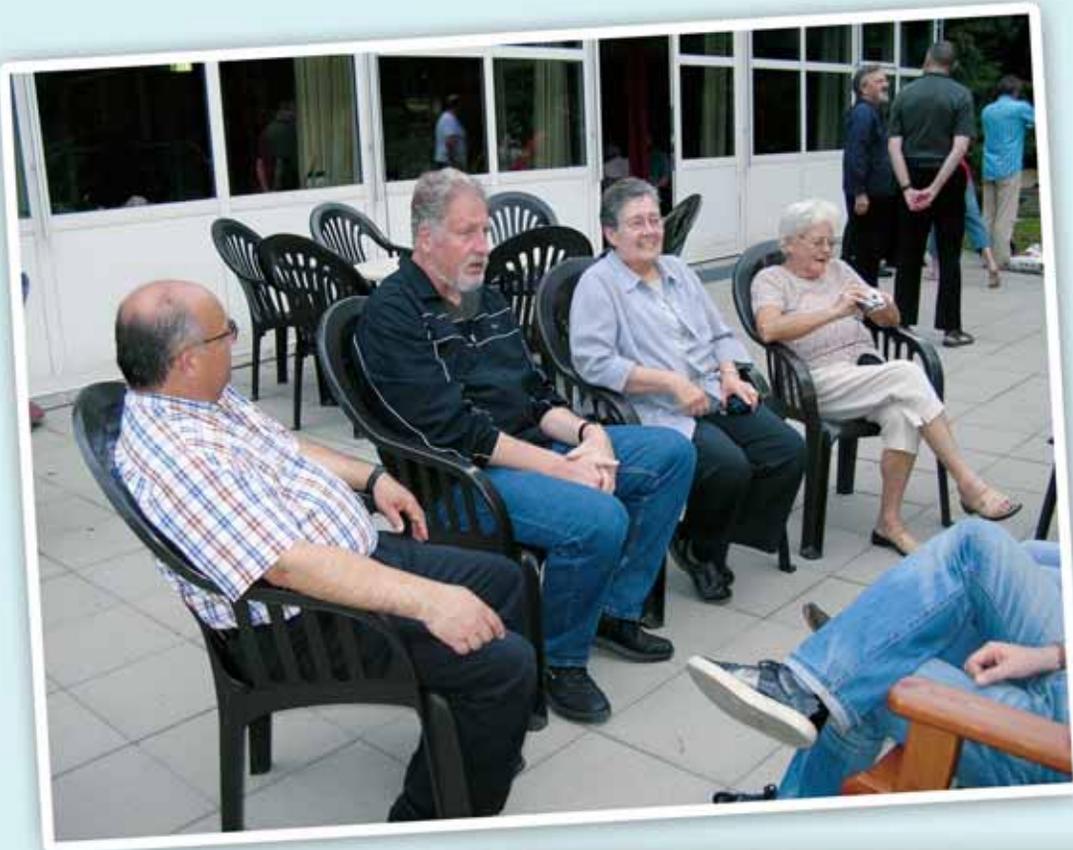


"It was a week of getting to know each other. Language and cultural differences did not impede our sharing, but enhanced our relationships as we got to know each other. I enjoyed our barbecue, bonfire and singing around the fire. It was a time to laugh, share and enjoy each other. We worked, we played and we prayed together as a community."

*Arlene Pelzer, Companion (USA)*

"Hearing about how our founders preached from their own experience of God, and how Jesus was a great preacher through both words and actions, challenges us to live in creative fidelity to our charism in order to announce to the world, especially to the youth, this treasure which God has given us, the spirituality of the Precious Blood."

*Sr. Elsie Vinhote, ASC (Perú)*



"The Precious Blood of Christ made it possible for us to meet brothers and sisters from different cultures, languages, traditions and histories which were very distinct one from the other. But we were united in friendship, experiencing communion as one people, one nation bought and redeemed by the Precious Blood."

*Fr. Humberto Jaña, CPP.S. (Chile)*





"To experience the presence of the spirituality of the Precious Blood in different parts of the world was most important to me. The diversity and use of spiritual resources were visible through the sessions. My faith has been intensified by the witness of my brothers and sisters throughout the world. The Blood of Christ calls me daily to conversion and will also bring conversion to the world."

*Fr. Damian Siwicki, CPPS. (Poland)*

"A call I felt was that of being called into the silence, letting go of thinking, of emotions and just being in the depth of the mystery of our Precious Blood spirituality and of God's unconditional love, while drawing all of my Precious Blood sisters and brothers around the world into this silence."

*Sr. Donna Liete, CPPS (USA)*



☛ Continued from page 6

reasons of health, you should abstain. In the meantime, however, it would be good for you to apply yourself to catechetical instructions which will provide you with reasons for re-cultivating, so to speak, matters dealing with morals. In addition, prepare things in alphabetical order so as to keep a note of everything that is worthy of preaching. Very profitable, too, would be a careful reading of the writings of Father Segneri, skipping over the mythological facts which are no longer in use in our times. In Segneri you will discover very beautiful material, and as you continue your letter-correspondence and having your compositions reviewed, you will form for yourself some programs conducive to the glory of God. Here is one, for example: you wish to give a catechetical instruction on charity. First read Segneri; next, check the index found in the “Manna” by the same author.”

“There you will find other points beyond what you have discovered in his *“Cristiano istruito”*. Then arrange your thoughts and proofs in successive order, supported then with opportune examples, avoiding in your preaching questionable matters and thus producing only certain doctrine. You will be richly blessed by God.”

“See that your preaching is simple, dignified, clear and tending toward getting results. Avoid being monotonous and learn how to distinguish the fervor of your instruction with the var-

ious inflections of your voice. These are basic things. The rest will follow. (...) In the matter of preaching, the ministry is facilitated by presenting examples from the life of the most holy Mary.”

“It will be easier to preach from the platform once you have acquired a certain facility in the use of pep talks. You can begin by giving “fervorinos” for general communions. Above all, have trust in God and you will be victorious. Become accustomed to being brief, and you will be doing a greater good<sup>10</sup>.”

Again and again the founder reminds himself and his missionaries that the best prepared sermon can't bear fruit unless the personal conviction of the preacher backs it. He writes to Card. Cristaldi: “Above all, offer prayers *sine intermissione* so that in preaching to others, I myself do not become worse<sup>11</sup>.”

So, how did Gaspar preach? Catechesis, instruction in the basic doctrines of faith, and love of the Church were most important for him. His sermon was like



a strong wind or a flowing river. He invites his audience to embark in the boat of the preacher. He took them on a journey aimed towards Christ and the beginning of a new life. ♦

<sup>1</sup> Mario Spinelli, *No Turning Back, The Life of Gaspar del Bufalo*, The Messenger Press, Carthagenia, Ohio, 2003, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> Letter #1413, to Fr. Beniamino Romani.

<sup>3</sup> Letter #581, to Fr. Adriano M. Tarulli.

<sup>4</sup> op. cit., p.134f.

<sup>5</sup> Letter #619, to Gonfaloniere Carlo Feliciangeli.

<sup>6</sup> Letter #1499.

<sup>7</sup> Letter #3891.

<sup>8</sup> Letter #1342.

<sup>9</sup> Letter #2140.

<sup>10</sup> Letter #2674.

<sup>11</sup> Letter #145.

**“The fascination of Jesus lies in his ability to listen, which is a real act of love towards his contemporaries. An attentive listening to the neighbor gives him the possibility to find the appropriate responses to the wounds of each soul, to conceive proper solutions for the most difficult situations, to do the right things. Jesus is the greatest communicator of all times because he transmits through words, gestures, deeds and miracle, a timeless value: love.”**

(Liana Marabini in *Cultures and Faith*, Vol. XVII, 2009, n. 3-4, p. 215, Civitas Vaticana)

by Sr. Johanna Rubin, ASC

St. Maria De Mattias, was born in Vallecorsa, on February 4, 1805, and baptized on the same day. Through her father, Giovanni De Mattias and St. Gaspar del Bufalo, she discovered that Christ's Blood was total love given for and to humanity. As a young adult, she nurtured in her heart an ardent desire to commit herself to Jesus through the choice of total consecration to Him. On March 1, 1834, Maria left Vallecorsa to go to Acuto, a small, isolated town in the mountains. Here she opened a school and founded the Congregation of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ. The spirituality of the Blood of Christ was the central inspiration for Maria's personal life and that of the Congregation.

Maria De Mattias died in Rome on August 20, 1866. The news passed quickly by word of mouth, "The saint has died." She was canonized by Pope John Paul II on May 18, 2003.

### A WOMAN OF PRAYER

There is no doubt that Maria was a woman of prayer. She was so deeply rooted in God's loving presence, that HER WHOLE LIFE WAS PRAYER. From the testimonies of the first sisters for the process of beatification and canonization, we know that Maria used every free moment to be in the chapel with her beloved Jesus. Her soul was longing for these moments of intimacy, where she just opened her inmost being with all the troubles, weaknesses, misunderstandings, contradictions... She was like a chalice, emptying herself and opening her heart to receive God's unconditional love. Nobody can understand Maria's life without prayer.

It was just natural that it was Maria's deep longing, that also her sisters would cultivate a deep prayer life; and she instructed the girls and the women who came to listen to her how to pray. Her favorite meditation was the Passion of Christ.

### A WOMAN OF FAITH

Looking at Maria as a woman of prayer, is only natural that she was a woman of FAITH. Giacinta Palombi states in her testimony:

"She was endowed with a deep faith which shone forth in all her words and actions to such a point that, just by seeing her, one was aware of being in the presence of a holy woman. She desired



Statue of St Maria De Mattias in Whicita, Kansas

## Maria De Mattias

### Woman of the word

that this faith which animated her be spread throughout the entire world, and I think that she would have given her blood for this."

### A WOMAN OF HOPE

Two testimonies:

"In addition to faith, the Servant of God had a very strong hope which was not founded, however, on her merits, but specifically on those of the most Precious Blood of Our Lord." (Caterina Pavoni)

"She placed all her hope in God; when she began the construction work without any money, she said she trusted always in the Lord. She used to say, 'This is God's work, not mine.'" (Nazarena Vecchini)

### A WOMAN OF CHARITY

We came to know that Maria was a woman of prayer, faith and hope. Needless to say: She was a woman of charity. Under the Cross, glancing at Jesus, she was moved by God's unconditional mercy and love. As we saw earlier on, it was there that she opened her whole inmost being to let this love flow into her heart and flow through her over into the hearts of all the sisters, the children, women, men, priests, bishops... flow into the whole universe.

To Biagio Valentini, C.P.P.S. the moderator general of that time, Maria writes: "I have received your very esteemed letter in which you inform me that three girls are arriving from Rome to join our Institute... I think that Your Reverence has acquainted them with the spirit of this holy work, which is all charity. We have carved this word in our minds and in our hearts. I repeat: CHARITY! CHARITY toward God and our dear neighbor."

### MARIA'S PREACHING

Maria preached! A preaching woman was more than unusual for that period of time in the history of the Church!!! Maria talked first to her sisters, but also to the children, to women and men who crowded the class rooms, the chapels, the churches...

Maria preached, because the chalice of her heart was overflowing with God's tender love, and she felt called to share with others what she has received. She felt deeply responsible for so many "poor souls who don't know Jesus Christ," who never hear the healing message that God loves them tenderly. Because Maria's heart was so inflamed by Jesus' love, she was yearning to see Jesus Christ loved by others.

To Father Merlini in Albano she writes: "After this (when she had opened her heart for God's love), I am filled with such tender love toward my neighbor that I would wish to run far and wide calling all souls to love Jesus."

Maria was a courageous woman, but she was also full of fear. In another letter to Father Merlini, she writes: "She had written to her guide that she was being troubled by fears because of her having to speak about God in public to women, men, priests, religious, and so on. She is writing amid tears... How is it possible for a woman, who ought to

lead a hidden life in imitation of the most holy Virgin... to live like this? Oh, God, what a delusion! So the thought suggests itself. She cannot repent of having spoken about God..."

We can see how full Maria's heart was, when we hear what she is writing in the same letter: "Scarcely ever did she find it possible to ponder over the various points before talking about them, but while engaged in giving information, she peacefully said what came from her heart, always with feelings of love toward Jesus Christ and the souls redeemed by Him."

And in another letter, Maria continues: "Every morning and evening I find myself surrounded by a throng of women and girls; I endure heat and cold on account of the crowding of the people, and I cannot disengage myself because they want to hear the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and they desire to go to confession. This morning I wrote to the Bishop for two Confessors... That soul is suffering because it would wish to remain hidden and withdraw from the sight of all, but she forces herself with peace and resignation, prompted by the love of Jesus and souls which cost Him Blood; yet always harassed by fear. Bless me, and bless these other daughters of mine."

### WHY DID MARIA ATTRACT SO MANY?

We will come to understand it, listening once more to the testimonies of the first sisters:

"When the Servant of God spoke of God, of his love for us, of the passion of Jesus Christ, etc., her face became so red that it seemed she had been working hard, she broke out in perspiration even in the winter and she would have to wipe her face with a handkerchief as though it were summertime. Her eyes would sparkle when she spoke about God or the Blood of Jesus, and from her fervor one could tell she was filled with love for her God." (Maria Anna Palombi)

"The fervor with which she passionately exhorted the people, taught Christian doctrine to the girls and boys, counseled the doubtful, and comforted those in difficulties showed how concerned she was for their SPIRITUAL WELFARE. Her way of doing it was so fine and effective that she left the people consoled." (Luisa Abri)

Maria preached as a woman – while preaching, she was totally herself. Her

exhortation was "a song of lived experience", everyday life experiences. Even though Maria was a Mystic, she was a woman down to earth, and this is probably what made her preaching so attractive to many simple people in the villages of the Ciocciara. She was one who shared with them their daily life, who was able to embrace them, who experienced the cold and the heat, sun, wind, rain, one who could understand their conflicts, burdens, their sin. She was an extraordinary woman, but just one of them!

A woman who preached was clearly suspicious to some people, especially to the clergy.

"I remember having heard told by the sisters living with the Foundress, that upon hearing that the Superior often preached to the people here in our little convent church in Acuto, and having received a complaint that a woman dared to preach in public, the Bishop of Anagni sent two religious priests to Acuto to secretly check out what was happening and to report back to him. Those religious priests, having heard her, reported to the Bishop that he should permit her to continue her apostolate, that our Foundress was always a model of all the virtues which she exercised in a truly extraordinary way and that we were amazed at what we saw in her and what we knew she did." (Angela Costantini)

### WHAT DID MARIA PREACH?

On the lap of her father Giovanni De Mattias and from St. Gaspar during one of his sermons in the Parish Church of Vallecorsa, she has learned the essence of her preaching. Gaspar talked about the Lamb of God, Jesus, who has given his whole life, all his blood drop by drop to show how tenderly God is loving every human being, the whole universe. The center of Maria's preaching was LOVE! The blood, shed on the Cross was for her a sign, expression, measure and pledge of the Divine Love.

As a little girl, Maria saw much bloodshed in her town. She did not understand all the hatred around her. In Jesus' bloodshed on the Cross, she discovered an answer to her burning questions. Besides this, devotion to the Precious Blood was widespread during this time.

Maria preached of God's love. She was conscious though that she had to break her message down to the real life of the people. We can see it in how she instructed her sisters.

"She was all attentive about the teaching of the basic truths of the faith, to us

religious. Thus we would learn it in a way so as to be able to then communicate it to the boys and girls, and to the children. And so the message would be attractive and easily understandable and they would want to listen..."

The unique goal of Maria's preaching was: "To see in the present times that beautiful order of things that the great Son of God came to establish on earth by His Divine Blood. This is what I want and what I hope for from his infinite goodness." (Letter to Bishop Vincenzo Annovazzi, Anagni, November 13, 1838)

### A MESSAGE FOR US

What can we learn from Maria's preaching?

The message has to be relevant to our lives. We cannot preach one way and live something differently.

Our message, like the message of Maria De Mattias has to be embedded in today's socio-cultural and ecclesial reality. We need to know it and to deal with it. We need to see the reality in which we live in the light of God's love and then respond to it. Our message cannot only be empty words. And we must try to speak a language, which can be understood by those who listen to us.

Maria was one of the simple people of Acuto and the other towns in which she came to open schools and to preach. We need to come down from our pedestals, say yes to the reality of our own life and yes to the reality which surrounds us. We need to become one with the people among whom we live and with whom we share the ups and downs of daily life. Immersed in our socio-cultural reality we then will have the right to talk, to preach, to share the good news of our spirituality.

We must cultivate a culture of dialogue – to give and to receive.

If Maria would live today, she certainly would use modern technology to announce the message of love. I can't imagine, she wouldn't. She was such a courageous woman and her heart was burning to spread this message of LOVE.

It was Maria's deepest desire to do the will of God, always, in every second of her life. She didn't use empty words: LORD, LORD... She has built her house on the rock. The congregation of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ is a proof of it. ♦

## Proposals for the International Spirituality Center (ICPBS)

### YOUTH

A common concern centered around the need to share Precious Blood Spirituality with young people. Ideas suggested ranged from having an international gathering of young people in Italy as part of our Bicentennial celebrations of the C.P.P.S. (2015), to sharing our musical and art resources, and developing reflection materials adapted for the youth based on themes of our spirituality. The Center could serve as a resource center for such materials.

### MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Develop and enhance the Web site of the ICPBS as a place to share resources, news and information from around the world. These resources would include written materials, short books, Precious Blood prayers and music, videos and cds that can be shared by organizations and parishes in different languages and reflecting diverse cultures. It is also necessary to catalogue resources that already exist so others can find and make use of available resources.

### GATHERINGS

To encourage all members of the Precious Blood Family to participate whenever possible in gatherings for various groups in order to deepen our spirituality and to discover how it is lived in diverse cultures and situations. To offer opportunities on the local and on the international level for different groups to gather around common interests and concerns in light of the spirituality of the Precious Blood.

### RETREATS

The Center should be a place where groups or individuals might come to deepen themselves in the spirituality. Different formats for doing this could be offered: private retreats; short sabbaticals; an intensive workshop on the spirituality (at the Center in Salzburg or in different places around the world); a place where the practice of Reconciliation and Justice might be experienced and methods taught, for example, through Circle Training as is done at the Center of Reconciliation in Chicago. Another idea that was brought up at different moments was to develop a 30-day retreat inspired in the spirituality of the Precious Blood and which those interested can use wherever they are.

*Proposals made by participants in the international workshop on Preaching  
Salzburg, May 2011*

☛ *Continued from front page*

essential part of the mission of the Church. This was affirmed again in the Twelfth Ordinary Synod of Bishops on the theme “The Word of God” (October 5-26, 2008) and continues to be affirmed by the upcoming Synod of Bishops (October 2012) on “The New Evangelization.”

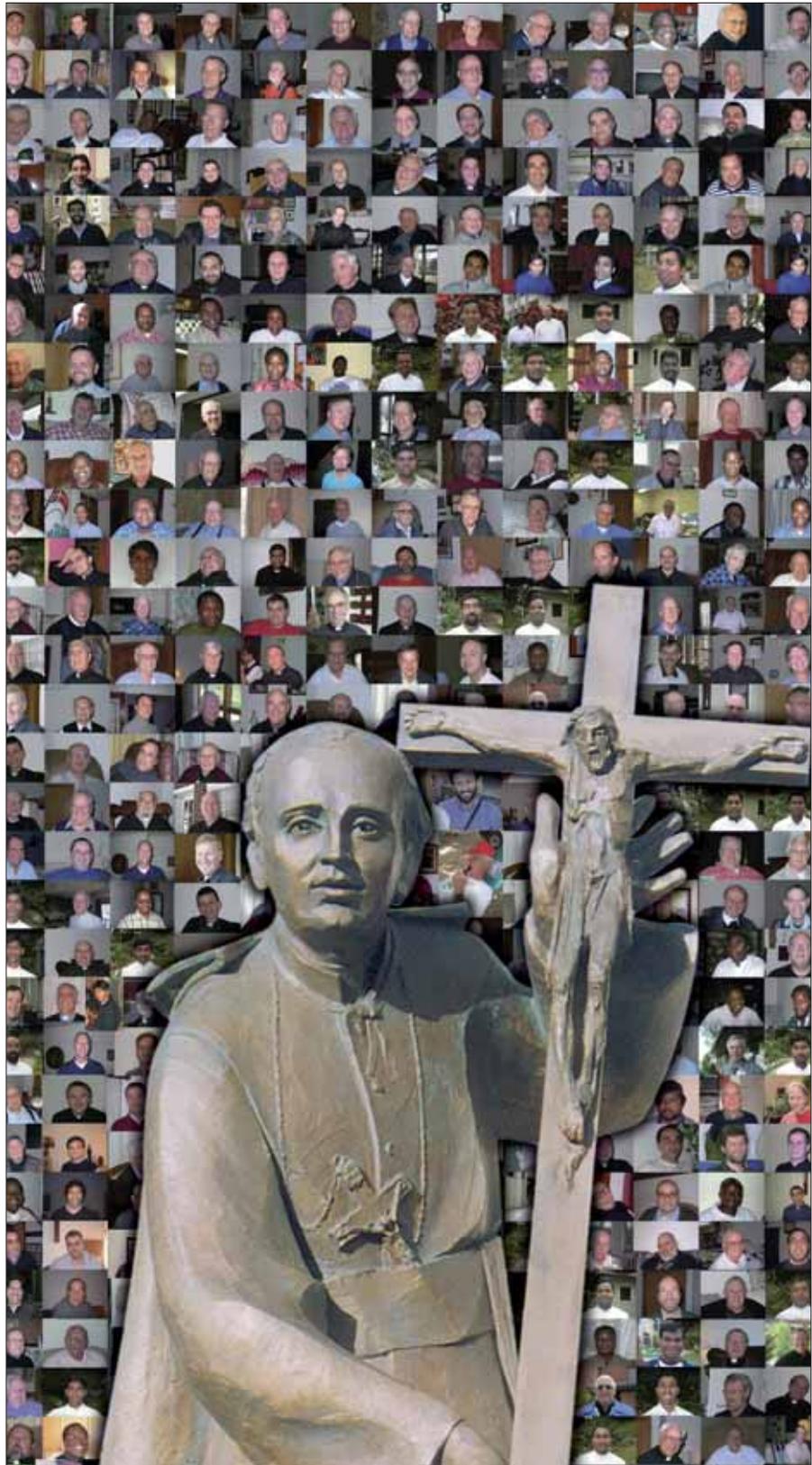
The three articles that make up this edition of our journal deal in a practical and direct way with the foundation of preaching and evangelization, offering models as examples. The first model is certainly Jesus himself. Father Barry Fischer, director of the International Center of Precious Blood Spirituality and leader of the workshop, speaks of Christ as preacher. Jesus carried out his evangelization above all by means of the incarnation, becoming a human person, inserting himself in the human condition. What he proclaimed he had received from God: his message of love and reconciliation. This message is addressed to persons who hear him and follow him, but his word has authority, because of the witness of his love and of his attentiveness to the cry of the blood, even to the point of his completely pouring out his own Blood. His message is not limited and goes beyond social and national distinctions. The Word of God that he announces becomes fullness of life and of revelation.

For us members of congregations guided by the spirituality of the Blood of Christ, our model is not only Jesus, but also Jesus incarnate in the witness of our founders. Sister Johanna Rubin, of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, and Father Willi Klein, of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, speak to us of our founders, Maria De Mattias and Gaspar del Bufalo.

The forceful personality of Maria De Mattias, definitely a woman of the Word, was born of her profound relationship with Jesus Crucified, whom she discovered each day in prayer. It was born also of her passionate commitment to others, to the “dear neighbor,” whom she served with intense love by leading them to

**“Oh what a treasure this salutary devotion is! I would like to have a thousand tongues to draw every heart tenderly to it, and I wish that my own soul would be totally penetrated with it.”**

**(St. Gaspar, Letter # 3785)**



Some of those thousand tongues today

## OUR AUTHORS



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**The full texts of the conferences given at the workshop  
can be found on the C.P.P.S. web page:  
[www.mission-preciousblood.org](http://www.mission-preciousblood.org)**

a genuine knowledge and fidelity to Christ.

Gaspar del Bufalo, the “trumpet of God,” listening to God through a profound meditation on His Word and through living intensely those “saddest” of times in which he lived, knew how to announce the Word that gave a new fire and new spirit to the many troubled people lacking guidance who flocked to hear him. The post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini* affirms: “The Holy Spirit who inspired the sacred authors is the same Spirit who impels the saints to offer their lives for the Gospel. In striving to learn from their example, we set out on the sure way towards a living and effective hermeneutic of the word of God.”

Today we ask ourselves how we are to carry out and update our commitment to proclaim the Word and to be evangelizers. The world has changed since our congregations were founded. Moreover, ours is an epoch of ever more rapid change. The social and ecclesiastical contexts have changed. The means of communication have also changed. We must insert ourselves into this change and ask how we are to announce the gospel in a new way, but above all we must ask how we communicate our gift to the Church: the mes-

sage of the Precious Blood. The workshop participants, coming from North and South America, from Europe and Africa, shared with another the diverse experiences arising from their cultural contexts and discovered how our spirituality can be better expressed in different situations. We must continue to discover in the spirituality of the Blood of Christ a treasure in which we rejoice. We want to be capable and available to communicate this treasure to others, so that they also may rejoice and be enriched. As we discover anew the joy of the spirituality of the Blood of Christ, let us recall the words of Blessed John Paul II: “the greatest joy is that of knowing that we are loved by God.”

I would like to close my presentation with a quotation from the final paragraph of the *Lineamenta* of the next Synod of Bishops on the theme of “new evangelization”:

“May the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the Kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the heart of the world.”

May the Gospel that we announce be the Gospel of the Good News of the Blood of Christ. ♦

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