



The Cup of the New Covenant

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD
No. 33 - October 2012

Introduction: MERLAP III

by Fr. Francesco Bartoloni, C.PPS.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. The Council recognized the fundamental role of lay persons in the Church. The document *Lumen Gentium* (nos. 30-40) affirms the obligation of pastors toward the laity “to recognize their ministries and charisms” so that they can fully carry out their mission in the Church and in the world. In the Church, defined by the Council as the “people of God,” going beyond all distinctions in functions, charisms and gifts, there exists “a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful.” The laity, who have a special vocation to be committed to the world, at the same time participate in the sav-

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The participants in MERLAP III during a visit to San Felice

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Youth and a Life “with Spirit”

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What kind of identity and Christian spirituality are we seeking or, perhaps better, *what kind of community and church associations, what kind of groups and young Christians do we want in the historical moment in which we must live?*¹

A double risk is hidden in the response: 1) Reflecting on Christianity while leaving society and contemporary culture on the periphery. 2) Imagining spirituality as “something reli-

gious” and, in consequence, not linking it directly either to anthropological processes or to the reality of life today.

To avoid both risks demands, on the one hand, accepting social, cultural and religious pluralism with all its consequences; on the other, to be well acquainted with the mode of being and living of young people in our time. I will consider the consequences of both questions indirectly.

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1. FUNDAMENTAL SPIRITUALITY

One must consider that every human being needs to confront “reality” (life), interpret it, respond and be responsible for what he/she does in life and, and for this reason a human being has a “spiritual existence” in the most elementary meaning of the term, because a human being is not a thing or simply an animal. In other words, a human being possesses an intelligence capable of moving beyond the material. Whether conscious of this

It follows that many of the primary problems of identity-spirituality are based on an incomplete, self-interested or manipulative definition of reality. In the first place, therefore, and in order not to pervert that which comes after, it is necessary to be faithful to reality, “honest with reality.”

This would be the *fundamental spirituality*, that is, a spirituality that concerns everyone and everything and, through which, an initial and fundamental response to the mystery of God present in reality is established by the position that one adopts toward reality.

Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4: 18-21; cf. Is 61: 1-2).

The Spirit drove Jesus and led him in this direction with a very clear purpose: to restore life and dignity to those who had been despoiled and treated unjustly by their own brothers and sisters. God does not consent to situations like these, and, from the outset, Jesus places himself on the side of those persons who are most disfavored. Thus, the Gospel clearly establishes that God’s cause is the cause of the humanization of human beings. The consequence cannot be



Several C.P.P.S. participants of “The Young Blood Youth Gathering” in Salzburg (June, 2012)

or not, whether wanting to or not, human beings are forced to confront life. This would be the first level of spirituality.

Every person is a “human being with spirit” and this *fundamental spirituality* is identified with the manner in which a person unifies and directs responses to situations, to the real, and is expressed in a mode of living. Thus, confronting the real demands above all respecting the truth of reality: to grasp and accept reality as it is and not inventing or modifying it “at our pleasure,” in a manner that responds to our demands.

2. SPECIFICALLY CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

What is *specifically Christian* in this fundamental spirituality requires living such a response according to and “with the spirit” with which Jesus of Nazareth lived. Jesus, in confronting the reality of his time – truly “allowed himself to be carried by the Spirit of God”: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed...

more clear: Christian spirituality is a project that, more than centering on the subject in itself, on personal perfection, decentralizes the subject and directs it to others, because only in leaving oneself, regarding others as if one were a Samaritan toward all, does one find authentic perfection and holiness.

3. EDUCATING OURSELVES AND LIVING “WITH SPIRIT”

I have outlined with broad strokes the scenario where spirituality is located. It is against this horizon that

lay movements and associations ought to be viewed, all the more so when they are aimed at young people. In addition, when it is a question of involving new generations in a lay spirituality (specifically as in the case of the spirituality of groups linked to the Missionaries of the Precious Blood), another fundamental theme arises, namely education.

Confronting life with the Spirit of Jesus, requires a prior path where teaching and learning to *live* is to *live together*; a path that corresponds to education. It is only with education that the human being can reach this.

From such a viewpoint, movements or associations and young people do not teach, that is, they do not set in fixed *signs/symbols* that which they know, but they are educated, that is, they are born, they grow, they live, recreating their own *symbols* of faith. Instruction corresponds with *teaching*: deciphering, cataloguing and renewing the signs of that which is known.

To *educate ourselves* is to live, exist, to go out of oneself, and to know and love those relations with nature, with other persons and with God in which we are growing: a personal and social process of growing in critical consciousness and of decision (*moral*, because it includes binding options and actions).

We must reject the notion, therefore, that education is synonymous with modeling and inculcating our ideas, however wonderful they may be. While affirming that instruction and education are complementary, nevertheless one must denounce the dangerous confusion of understanding education from the same perspective as instruction.

Christian practice, in seeking to lead young people to Christ, can have no other program than that of getting close to the life of young people, to the present reality of the world, to the joys and sorrows, and to the hopes of new generations. The relationship with new generations thus brings “educating ourselves” to the present reality. Along this line one must situate the *mutual implication* of education and faith; to mature and to grow as persons, that is, in a pro-

found and human relationship with nature, with others and with “the Other,” who contains the very possibility of faith. The science of education and the wisdom of faith are mutually enriching in a dialogical and permanent relationship.

4. GROWING IN DAILY RELATIONSHIPS

There are relationships – with oneself, with others, with things, with God – that are visible and conscious, but there are others that are hidden and unknown. Relationships are fundamental in life since these are what form persons definitively. They serve to delineate the fundamental elements of identity – one is my grandfather, another my sister, the postman, and so on. More than biol-

Becoming aware of this, for example, and living this relationship – in such danger today – in a conscious and responsible manner, makes us all mature and grow as persons. Likewise religious faith constitutes a previous relationship which is activated after awareness of reality and nurtured by this awareness. In conclusion: to exist is a dynamic concept that includes an eternal dialog of human being with human being, of human beings with the world, of human beings with their creator.

Finally, a similar educational path for accompanying the young requires at least three important options: 1) Handing on and activating faith and religion as “a direction that gives salvation, that restores life, with its dignity and seriousness,

“Christian practice, in seeking to lead young people to Christ, can have no other program than that of getting close to the life of young people, to the present reality of the world, to the joys and sorrows, and to the hopes of new generations.”

ogy, metabolism or genetics, it is our relationships that make us who we are (sons/daughters of our parents, brothers or sisters of our brothers and sisters, friends and contemporaries of our friends and neighbors). Paulo Freire was not wrong when he affirmed: “It is fundamental to begin with the idea that the human being is a being of relationships and not only of contacts.”

Thus it is a question of being ever better in relationship, with greater effectiveness and with greater depth and awareness. Nevertheless, we must add, it is more than just establishing new relationships; we must perceive or be accountable – in the sense of “bringing to light” – of all the relationships that preceded us and in which we were already immersed, although without knowing it, without being aware. We are *children* of the sun and of the earth, of water and of the landscape that nurtures us from our birth. *Mother nature* is outside us and within us.

and that gives voice and hope to the concrete existence of the young. 2) Locating the educational processes in the area of collective and everyday life by means of models of social pedagogy that start from “the person in the group.” 3) Involving everyone – young people and educators – in this wager on reality, taking the position – we cannot be neutral! – with concrete attitudes and commitments. ♦

¹ In these pages I am seeking to indicate the heart of the conference, “Education and the ‘new covenant’ with youth. Divine ‘provocation,’ human vocation and a life ‘with spirit,’ of the “Meeting of Representatives of Lay Associate Programs.” The summary of the subject matter weaves together three paths: 1) A new covenant with young people (“as young people are, what they want, and how they provoke us.” 2) The divine “provocation” and the human vocation (“vocation and the spirituality of youth”). 3) Education and vocational orientation (“unconditional acceptance and *educating ourselves* in confronting the relationships of daily life”).

BICENTENNIAL C.P.P.S. FOUNDATION 1815 - 2015

2012-2013: The Past:
A glorious history to remember

2013-2014: The Present:
Our reconciling presence

2014-2015: The Future:
Our response to the Cry of the Blood



A. S. GASPARE
NEL QUINTE
DELLA SUA CONGREGAZIONE
1815 - 1961

Precious Blood Spirituality in the Life and Mission of the Laity

It seems providential that the third International Meeting of Representatives of Lay Associate Programs (MERLAP III) would gather as the church begins to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. This ecumenical council renewed the vision of church as People of God where clergy, religious and the laity are first and foremost coequal disciples of Jesus. This vision opened new possibilities for the lay faithful at the heart of the mission of the Church in the contemporary world.

In these past fifty years our worldwide missionary community has found resonance between our Precious Blood spirituality and that envisioned by Vatican II. This should not surprise us. Our founder, Saint Gaspar, was one among a number of

by Fr. Thomas Hemm, C.P.P.S.

understand the origins and history of the church in a new light. Sharing the Word of God with my neighbors in small Christian communities in Chile gave me new insights into Jesus' ministry in Galilee. In their simplicity they would challenge my narrow perspective as a priest living in a religious community.

On their part the laity would bring their perspective of family, neighborhood and workplace. If we read the gospel accounts more carefully we find that Jesus doesn't invite his followers into some kind of special place apart like a convent or a seminary. He goes out to meet them right where they live and work down by the lake. It would be more accurate to say that, rather than inviting the

cate a radical change in their lives. Not that they would never fish again—after all this is their livelihood. The deeper meaning of these accounts is that *life is no longer confined to their profession or their occupation*. They must reorder their priorities and find the time and energy for so much more than just holding down a job. Jesus is not saying that they will no longer fish for fish. Rather from now on their main concern will be “fishing for people”—that is bringing about God's kingdom right in their place of work, their neighborhood, as well as in other villages down the way.

On another occasion Mark states that James and John “left their father Zebedee in the boat... and followed him.” If we consider the story carefully we realize that Jesus has not invited them to leave their families to live with him off in some “community house”. Actually we're told in the gospel accounts that Jesus has no real estate: “The Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head”. (Luke 9:58). Rather Jesus—together with James and John—has followed Simon and Andrew into *their* home. (Mark 1:29) Rather than invite them *away* from their work and their neighborhood Jesus enters the circle of their families and neighbors to celebrate the coming of God's kingdom right then and there.

This is the challenge for all of the baptized.

THE CHARISM OF SAINT GASPAR

Over the centuries, the institutions of the church have had the tendency to become absorbed in their own needs. Time and again when this happened, the Holy Spirit would raise up men and women to call for renewal. Through his own personal experience of disgrace and exile, Saint Gaspar was one of those who would invite priests out of their comfort zone to go out to the people in the countryside and in their villages in the abandoned regions of the Papal States.

“Rather than invite (the disciples) away from their work and their neighborhood Jesus enters the circle of their families and neighbors to celebrate the coming of God's kingdom right then and there.”

modern saints who had prophetically anticipated the missionary spirit of the Vatican Council in their apostolic work.

It is significant that shortly after the conclusion of the first session of the Council, Pope John XXIII made a special visit to the tomb of Saint Gaspar to ask his intercession for the success of the Council. Pope John had a great devotion to the Precious Blood and to Saint Gaspar whom he called “the world's greatest apostle of the devotion to the Most Precious Blood of Jesus.”

REREADING THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Since the Council, as we experience a new model of church, we begin to

disciples into *his* world, Jesus made himself at home in *their* world at the edge of the sea.

Of course Saint Mark states they “abandoned their nets and followed him” (1:18). Does this mean that they would simply *no longer work at fishing*? How would they support their families if they totally abandoned their work? Jesus didn't offer some kind of scholarship fund for the upkeep of his disciples. As a matter of fact as the Gospel account continues we find Jesus, more often than not, *joining them in their boats and fishing with them!* Even after his death (John 21: 1 ff.) the risen Lord appears to them after a night of fishing.

What, then, does “abandoning their nets” mean? It most certainly indi-

In his contemplation of the mystery of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Saint Gaspar recognized the primordial spirituality of the Church that would engage the people. He claimed that, of all of the multiple devotions of the rich heritage of the Church, the devotion to the Most Precious Blood is “the basis, the sustenance, the essence of all.” In a letter to Pope Leo XII he wrote’ “...in this devotion we have a compendium of faith itself; that is why, in the consecration of the chalice, we say: ‘mysterium fidei’...” (The mystery of faith).

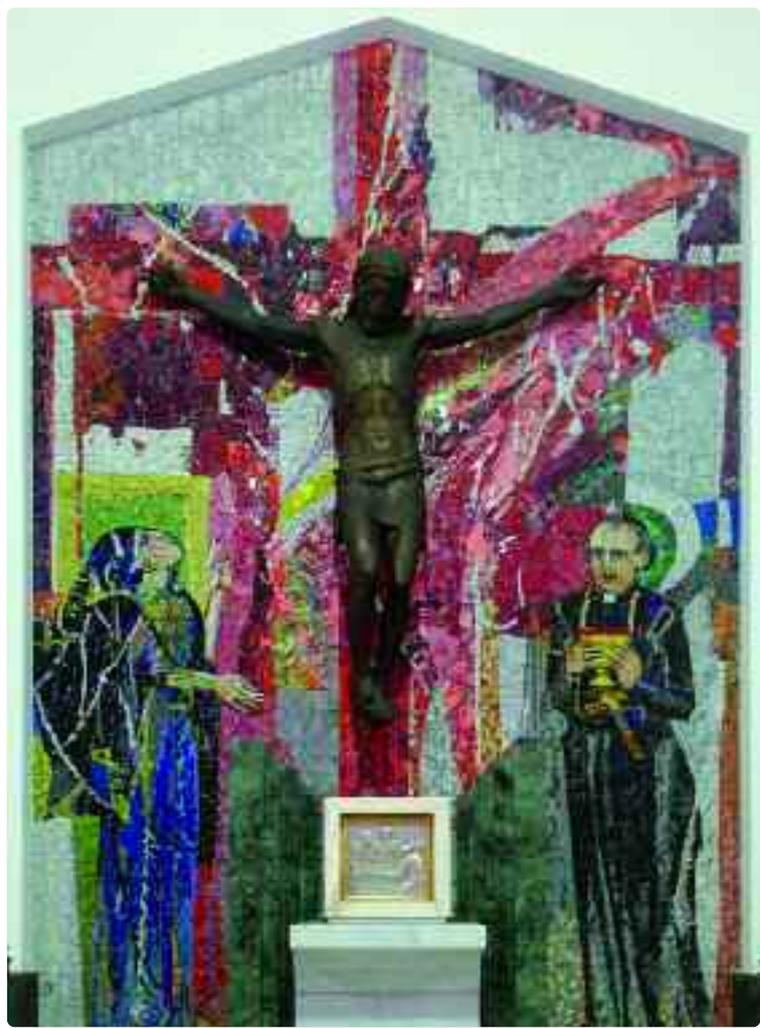
There is a mosaic in the chapel where MERLAP meetings were held which graphically portrays the source of Precious Blood spirituality. The Mother of Jesus is standing on the one side of the Cross; and, on the other side, Saint Gaspar stands as the “beloved disciple” holding the Chalice to receive the Precious Blood. The Church was born from the side of Christ on the Cross, nourished in the sacraments flowing from his side: the Eucharistic Body and Blood and the life giving waters of Baptism/Confirmation.

When we participate in Holy Eucharist we hear the command of Jesus, “Do this in memory of me.” With this command, Jesus certainly is telling us to eat his Body and to drink his Blood. But his command is far more comprehensive, inviting us to be willing to give *our* bodies and shed *our* blood, handing over our lives in loving service for others – even to the point of giving our lives in martyrdom. This is the fullest meaning of our Eucharistic celebration.

The Vatican Council put it this way: “The laity, dedicated to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are mar-

velously called and prepared so that ever richer fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them.

For all their works, if accomplished in the Spirit, become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ: their prayers and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, even the hardships of life, if patiently borne...” (*Lumen Gentium*, # 34).



The Mosaic in the chapel at Via Narni

THE MISSIONARY DIMENSION OF HOLY EUCHARIST

The Letter to the Hebrews brings out the missionary dimension of the Holy Eucharist. The fulfillment of Eucharistic sacrifice is ultimately accomplished in the messiness of the world. Our celebration of the Eucharist has consequences. “Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels. Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing

their imprisonment, and of the ill-treated as of yourselves, for you also are in the body.” (Heb 13: 2-3)

The author reminds us that the sacrifice of Jesus is not accomplished within the confines of the temple. Jesus does not continue the old ritual sacrifice in which the priest sacrifices the lambs and goats on the altar in the temple. Rather he offers his *own* body in sacrifice. Just as the remains of sacrificial animals are then thrown

out in the dump, “Jesus also suffered *outside the gate*, to consecrate the people by his own blood. The place of the outcast became sacred.

And we hear the challenging invitation. “Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the reproach that he bore. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the one that is to come” (Hebrews 13).

This brings to mind the demanding words of Pope John Paul II: “When Saint Gaspar del Bufalo founded your Congregation in 1815, he was asked by my Predecessor Pope Plus VII to go where no one else would go and to undertake missions which seemed unpromising... Trusting that the Pope’s request was Christ’s command, your Founder did not hesitate to

obey, even if as a result some criticized him for being too novel. Casting his nets into deep and dangerous waters, he made an astonishing catch.

“Two centuries later, another Pope summons the sons of Saint Gaspar to be no less bold in their decisions and actions - to go where others cannot or will not go and to undertake missions which seem to hold little hope of success.” (September 14, 2001)

Saint Gaspar, pray for us! ♦

Blood Eternally Young: Proposals for Proclaiming the Blood of Christ to Young People

by D. Domenico D'Alia, C.P.P.S.

The life of a Christian is not simply an invitation to go toward something, but it is a call to grow beyond oneself. God calls us to himself. It is the task of human beings to understand, therefore, what path to take in order to bring to completion their existence to its fullness. The service of humankind, indispensable for building the Reign of God, takes place, therefore, by means of an intense activity of educational promotion that permits the young to grow beyond themselves, discovering the richness and complexity of existence, and capable of expressing themselves, in all their beauty. Each individual possesses particular qualities and capacities that represent the instruments for one's life work which need to be developed and cared for so that they can bear fruit.

For Missionaries of the Precious Blood, education represents the offer of a concrete experience for growth in autonomy, responsibility and liberty.

We are concerned with helping the individual understand what he/she is called to be, convinced that the human horizon is already contained within the horizon of faith. The indispensable condition for assuring the human and Christian maturity of young people is given in the relationship between educator and the young person. The relationship does not consist in transmitting messages or abstract truths, but is rather based on example. The pastoral style is realistic, avoiding abstract discourses and preferring to offer proposals whose credibility is based on lived human experience.

It is in the light of this concern for humankind that the Service of pastoral ministry with youth becomes more specific, in relation to the charism and the spirituality of the Blood of Christ. The Service is concerned with *responding to the identi-*

ty of the Blood, creating the open door toward the future of the Congregation, together with the other fields of pastoral ministry.

The primary task of our proclamation is to respond to the cry of the Blood, consistent with our spirituality and our charism that, precisely because they are founded on the Blood of Christ, are prepared for a spirit of genuine selfless generosity. This is the cry of the blood from youth without parents, who tirelessly seek healthy, strong and coherent points of reference. As Missionaries of the Precious Blood, we must respond to the cry of this young humanity with a steadfast faith and an integrated and joyful life.

The principal concern of a Missionary of the Blood of Christ should be human formation, affective and psychological. The first stage of a balanced affectivity comes about through the discovery of a healthy humanity and sexuality. We are interested in whole persons, in the totality and entirety of their being.

To foster the development of a healthy affectivity, we must also accompany young persons in the discovery of their own talents as well as limitations. We must aid young people in freeing themselves from the expectations of others, teaching them to listen to their own desires, in order to discover their own aspirations and, if these are healthy, to follow them with determination and



Axel "Danny" Oliva and D. Domenico D'Alia animating an outdoor prayer service at the International Spirituality Center in Salzburg

perseverance. We must liberate our young people from the logic of doing, which relegates the value of their lives and of their dignity to a calculus of productivity.

Young persons, who have become conscious of their own selves, discover that they are thrown into an infinite series of relationships. The discovery of the other renders the young person a social individual. Young people find themselves inserted into the midst of society and are called to make their own contribution in a responsible manner.

The task of the Service of pastoral ministry with youth is therefore to foster in young people the development of a communitarian consciousness and especially a political consciousness, helping them to stay informed about international relations, by expressing their critical judgement on the events of everyday life.

The experience of faith, which we Missionaries are called to offer from our spirituality, is not a faith that is exclusively contemplative, but a dynamic, active faith, which spends itself in the world and allows itself to be questioned by the world, a faith that is not afraid of getting its hands dirty and that speaks with clarity of humanity and its mystery.

For this reason we are concerned with providing young people with courses of education in prayer, in which we explain how to pray and what to ask for. The center of every life of prayer is obviously the Eucharist. Our main interest is that young people acquire an awareness of the memorial value of the Eucharistic Prayer and of the saving power of the Sacrifice renewed.

The methods of pastoral ministry cannot be any longer “methods of Christianity,” but of evangelization. We cannot take for granted that the contexts in which we find ourselves operating are Christianized contexts, we cannot take for granted that the young people whom we encounter in our activities have already been formed, even by a first evangelization. We must present

UPCOMING EVENTS

XX GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Collegio Preziosissimo Sangue
Via Narni, 29
Roma

July 8-19, 2013

**The main agenda will be the election
of the new leadership team for the period 2013-2019**

ourselves as strangers, and enter into their lives with delicacy and decision.

There are three basic methods of our pastoral ministry:

WINNING BACK

Italy and Europe in general are today territory that is to be “reconquered”: we must win men and women anew to the faith. We must fight strenuously, with all the weapons at our disposal, knowing that the stakes are high: the salvation of humankind and the coming of the Reign of God. Communication is the field of battle of our youth ministry, communication that is effective, credible, but above all true, without frills, and which has the courage to call things by their names. It is communication that does not fear conflict, confrontation, that does not seek accommodating positions, but which is conscious of the price of being radical. A key element is the simplification of the gospel message that is proposed. It should be brief, immediately applicable, concrete. It is centered on repeatable proposals that give meaning to life.

WITNESS

The first contact with God for young people in our ministry comes by way of our own witness of life, from what our daily life says about our relationship with God. We must get close to young people and become their companions on the journey, dealing with their problems and questions with

clarity, beginning with Scripture: let it resolve their doubts and lead them to the Eucharist and in the breaking of the bread they will come to know the one Teacher.

We must think about our witness in terms of showing and not demonstration, by suggesting and not by conditioning.

RECONCILIATION

Evangelization is always carried out in relationship with the world. World and Church influence one another. As Missionaries of the Precious Blood, we must develop a pastoral ministry of reconciliation that takes into account the necessity of the world for our apostolic mission, remembering that faith is above all an encounter, an encounter with acceptance and pardon. Faith is transmitted because two persons encounter one another: one announces and the other listens, perceiving that the one who announces is credible. Faith is a personal encounter with Jesus. It is good news.

The youth and vocational pastoral ministry of the Congregation seeks, with humility and passion, to open the lives of the young to the future and to hope. We know that we have much to do to improve our work and the way we carry it out. But the dreams are not ours; they are entrusted to the will and to the capability of our young people, who are growing with us and who share the ideal of a practical and effective faith, capable of truly transforming life. ♦

The Formation of Companions

by Mark Giesige and Maria Trout

INTRODUCTION

Something brings us together in the Precious Blood family. It is not by accident that we find a common thread, a recognition that we share something that was planted within us by the master gardener. Our love of the Precious Blood of Jesus, our belief in its power to heal the world, brings us together no matter how different we may be. It makes us friends and companions, people who share an understanding and a bond.

In the day-to-day life of Jesus, he was seldom alone. Not long into his earthly mission, he began to draw people to his side. Those he selected were sometimes petty, greedy, obtuse, and quarrelsome. What did he see in them? Perhaps he chose them so that the rest of us could say, “if they could become disciples of Christ, so can we.” Borrowing his strength and wisdom, they went on to do great things—and so can we.

Nearly 200 years ago, a man who was born in this city (of Rome) felt a great passion for the Precious Blood of Jesus, and that passion impelled him to go forth, leave his home, and spend his life looking for kindred spirits. Probably, the members of Gaspar’s initial group were not taken from among the best and brightest that the Church had to offer. Imagine Gaspar approaching the top students at Rome’s best seminaries: “I’m starting a new religious society and we’re going to be poor, work ourselves nearly to death, tramp around the countryside preaching in tiny little villages, evangelize vicious bandits, and be hated by at least one Pope.” How many would have followed him?

Yet enough followed him. Something in what he said rang true to enough people that we are sitting here today, their descendants, carrying the same sacred message out into the world.

We have formed our own tribe. We have become a family. We share a unifying mission. We speak a common language. And no, it did not happen by accident.

COMPANIONS OF THE MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

As priest and brother candidates are formed by the Missionaries before their ordination or profession, so too are their lay associates, called Companions, in the Cincinnati and Kansas City Provinces. There are approximately 500 Companions in 32 groups around the United States.

This is how one of our Companions, Susan Densmore of Florida, explains the experience of being a Companion: “I feel connected to the people I love. I feel like I have a lifeline that keeps me grounded, safe, accepted, respected and loved. My

Companions are my extended family. Reflecting on the Gospel message, Jesus is the vine and we are the branches ...I envision all of us Companions literally connected to one another: holding each other’s hands, forming a circle with Jesus, feeling the pulse that sustains us, feeds us, nurtures us, comforts and protects us, loves us: what a feeling!”

THE INVITATION

We become family. We become connected. How does that happen?

For Companions, It happens through the work of the Holy Spirit, but also through very deliberate planning, language and written materials.

Being a lay associate is very different from most of the parish groups that Catholics in the U.S. might join. One is drawn in by a spirituality that takes time to understand and appreciate. One becomes committed to being a part of the group, to continued study and formation. We also want people to understand that they are entering into a relationship with a group of Missionaries, a religious society – and that while a group might meet at a parish, it is not parish-based.

The process begins with the sponsor, who is a C.P.P.S. priest or brother.

The sponsor sends a letter inviting people to an information meeting. The information meeting is conducted by someone from the Companions office, either the director or one of the co-directors. People usually have many questions, because Companions is not like the other church groups to which they might belong.

The co-director attempts to be as clear as possible about the expectations for Companions:

- It is an invitation to hear a call; not all will experience this calling;
- Inquirers go through a two-year process of study and formation before making a commitment to the Community;
- That commitment takes the form of a covenant with the Community, which is accepted by the Provincial Director or his representative at a Community event;
- Companions are expected to attend monthly gatherings, and as many Community events as possible;
- Becoming a Companion is the beginning of a lifetime of learning about and deepening one’s experience and appreciation for Precious Blood Spirituality.

INQUIRY PHASE

Those who decide to attend the next gathering after the invitation meeting then enter into inquiry. They are given an inquiry and formation workbook that has 12 chapters: four initial chapters for inquirers

and eight further chapters for those who decide to go on with formation as Companions.

The four initial chapters introduce inquirers to the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. It is not unusual to find that people who have been active members of a Precious Blood parish for their entire lives have no knowledge of their pastor's religious community. As the inquirers complete the first four chapters, they take part in a simple welcoming rite, in which they are welcomed into formation.

FORMATION PHASE

Inquirers who have committed themselves to further formation begin to receive C.P.P.S. mailings, such as newsletters, magazines and other communications from the provincial offices, to help introduce them to the larger C.P.P.S. Community.

They also move on to the next section of the inquiry and formation workbook. The next eight chapters of the workbook are meant to deepen the inquirers' knowledge of the C.P.P.S. and its Companions, leading to their first covenant with the C.P.P.S.

A covenant is a written statement of one's pledge or commitment about one's area of ministry or mission; one's spiritual

life and growth in spirituality; and one's community life in relationship with the congregation and Companions. The initial covenant is for a one-year period. Later covenants cover three years.

COVENANTED COMPANIONS

A Companion inquirer who has been through two years of formation and has written a covenant may then present that covenant at a Community event such as an assembly or retreat. If geography keeps a group's inquirers from attending such an event, a Missionary appointed by the provincial director will travel to that group to accept the covenants.

As they present their first covenant, they are given an insignia that they can wear to show that they belong to the Precious Blood family. Companions understand that they are united in prayer and in mission with Missionaries and their lay associates from around the world.

FURTHER FORMATION

Companions—as with C.P.P.S. priests and brothers—continue their spiritual formation for the rest of their lives. They gather each month with their Companion group. They help plan gatherings, preparing prayers, discussions and refreshments. The Companions office supplies printed materials that help groups with their monthly discussions.

Conveners, or lay leaders of each group, help relay information to their Companion groups and set the tone for discussions. Conveners are required to attend a workshop at the beginning of their terms so that they are following common practices.

Uniformity in these practices is important because Companion groups cover a large area in the United States. Without a uniform set of practices, each group might develop its own way of doing things, which would disconnect its Companions from the larger Community to which they made their covenant.



A working session during MERLAP III

EMPOWERED BY THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

People who have made two or three covenants with the Missionaries are often amazed to see how far they have traveled from that first information meeting. Being a Companion is an

important way of life for many. It does not mean that they take on new ministries, though some certainly do. But they carry out their God-given ministries in a new way, empowered by the spirituality of the Precious Blood. Companions are a source of strength and support to the C.P.P.S.

Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus drew people to himself. He helped them see more clearly the good that was already inside them. He empowered them to preach and teach on his behalf. He sent them out and made them part of his mission. Thousands of people heard his message. Some of them took it to heart and set out on the road with him.

Our prayer is that people continue to hear that call and set out on that road. "Missionaries are not statues," St. Gaspar said. They move. They grow. They comprehend. They accept challenges. They feel a full measure of joy. They learn from their suffering. And always, always, they continue on the path that the Lord has set for them. ♦

How Do I Live Precious Blood Spirituality?

This article has more to do with testimony than reflection. I am going to concentrate on justifying why I have come, as a Christian, to live my faith in my parish and in my diocese, with the stamp of the Precious Blood. And I hope to express some of the joys and the challenges of my pastoral service. About the spirituality of the Precious Blood I only want to make one note because much has been written and done well by experts.

Francisco Biedma, a layman of the Iberian Province and professor at the Congregation's School of St. Francis Xavier, summarized in this way our spirituality in one of the workshops presented in the Iberian province:

- The connection of Blood and Life will bring the Precious Blood family to work in situations where lack of life exists.
- The connection of Blood and Reconciliation will bring the Precious Blood family to be a vehicle of reconciliation.
- The connection between Blood, Covenant, and Communion ought to bring us to reflect on our common attitude at work, in the parish, etc.

I believe that the three poles which Francisco Biedman points out to us will be a constant in my life as a believer and as a layman who lives the Gospel together with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

Very important is the family into which one is born, a family of believers, concerned that their children be educated in the Catholic Church. For this the first sacrament, baptism, is necessary. From this first sacrament should arise a commitment. The baptized commits him/herself to the growth of the seed of faith which has been planted in his/her heart and witness to it by word and deed. True, at that moment, he/she was not conscious of the responsibility that accompanied the reception of this sacrament, but the perseverance of my parents and sponsors made it possible for it

by Damián J. Niso Chaves

to keep growing in the heart of the Church and to increase my commitment to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

My Christian commitment is not an amusement or a way of filling free time. It is a way to feel useful and to do something for others. I feel called by Christ to work with him in the transformation of the world. As such I understand it as a **vocation**. All this is not my doing. There are so many others (families, friends, priests) who have influenced me in their own way so that I *would have ears open to hear*.

Being near a Precious Blood community has helped me live the Gospel with commitment and responsibility. Our charism is made present in daily life from the celebration of the Eucharist; the Blood is poured out to commit oneself in a disinterested manner to raise up a person in all his/her dignity.

Benedict XVI speaks of those who hear the voice of the Lord and give their answer. These he calls "*instruments of grace to spread the love of God*." Instruments of service in a

their causes... there is no Eucharist, there is no blood poured out.

In this 21st century overwhelmed in profound crisis, we recall the first Christian communities because they are known to have held all things in common and shared their goods, to have seen that no one should experience need. When a community celebrates the blood poured out and forgets the poor, Paul says that as we share the Body of Christ, we are sharing our own condemnation.

I have to be an instrument based on gratefulness and my radical love. In the end I have to give everything, put the best of myself at their disposal, not looking for a reward or even feeling good about it, not measuring my service by the immediate result. I discover that my reward is in the love, in the service itself.

THE JOYS THAT I EXPERIENCE

I am going to list some of the joys I have experienced.

The first joy has to do with **the call and the response**. God has put his eyes and his heart on me. He has looked at me with love; he has called me and sent me.

"If we don't seat the poor at the table, if we don't have communion with them, if we don't share their problems and their causes ... there is no Eucharist, there is no blood poured out."

community that wants to be a servant of the poor (the incarcerated, thieves...) after the image of its founder.

I have always wanted to work in a community serving the poor, in a community that celebrates the Eucharist, where the Precious Blood poured out becomes the sacrament of Christ. It reminds me that if we don't seat the poor at the table, if we don't have communion with them, if we don't share their problems and

A second joy comes when **I am with the other**. I meet another or another meets me; we are of equal dignity; we enter into dialogue with our abilities and potentialities.

The call to be and to make happy is another joy that is mine. God wants me to be happy and to contribute to the happiness of others.

The love of God is given freely because I have received it freely and in abundance. I am not in the vineyard of the Lord moved by personal

interest or the desire to gain a reward. What is so marvelous about all this is that **I discover in my brother or sister the face of the Lord.** In him or her I must find the object of my pastoral work. It is the theological place, the place where God is, where God reveals himself, where God speaks to us, the place in which we can find God.

The joy of feeling **sent by the community.** I don't work alone or do my own thing. I experience my apostolate as a joyful ministry of the community. Not only am I sent, but I am also supported by my community.

John Paul II in *Redemptor Hominis* says that the human person cannot live without love, that he/she needs it. This is another joy that God gives me: that of being able **to offer love.**

THE CHALLENGES OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

At the first Theological Congress, which took place in the Diocese of Coría-Cáceres, in Spain, our bishop Francisco Cerro Chaves said that the challenges of the New Evangeli-

zation should be sown with enthusiasm such that the Gospel grabs us and is spread.

Some of the challenges we face at this moment:

We live at a time in which **globalization** is real. Our evangelization will have to adapt its preaching and its content to the characteristics and the needs of those who receive it.

In a society in profound crises, **the impoverished** should be our primary concern. One must be open to reality and to the new faces of poverty.

We will have to nourish **the mystical** which gives meaning to our pastoral work. We cannot fail to take care of ourselves letting activity after activity threaten us and keep us from that which is essential.

Lack of belief and indifference are signs of our time. Today we do not have time to pause and to reflect and analyze.

Personal relationships must be at the base of our work, putting people first in our lives and in our work, recognizing their dignity, responsibility and ability.

We must be in the process of **formation**, because formation is not just accumulating knowledge and skills. Rather it is a process of configuration and identification arising from action illuminated by faith.

CONCLUSION

May the Eucharistic Jesus, who gave his life freely so that all might live, help us to make of our lives a generous and free offering, a gift of our very selves. In this way, we will not be concerned just with our own interests, but rather we will together look for what is best for all in accord with the common good and the Christian sharing of goods.

I invite the whole Precious Blood family to be witnesses in this New Evangelization, following the charism of our founder, St. Gaspar, of the ministry of the Word and Reconciliation which becomes real in parish ministry, in the family, retreat, spiritual exercises, preaching and Christian formation.

May St. Gaspar enlighten us, support us, and keep us united. ♦



Fr. Francesco Bartoloni chats with a group of lay associates during a tour of the Rome of St. Gaspar

The Spirituality of the Precious Blood in Family Life

The family, “the patrimony of humanity,” is one of the most important treasures among the Latin American peoples. It has been and is the school of faith, the arena of human and civic values, the home in which human life is born and welcomed generously and responsibly.

Each Christian family is a “community of life and love” that receives the mission of “guarding, revealing, and communicating love, as a living reflection and royal participation in the love of God for humanity and the love of the Lord Christ for the Church, his spouse” (John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 17).

THE FAMILY: SCHOOL FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

How does the spirituality of the blood permeate and give meaning to the lives of spouses and their family?

The marriage covenant is a plan of God, is loved by God and is maintained in the New Covenant of Christ. This allows us to see with clarity that the sacrament of marriage is also marked and sealed with the blood of the Lord. This reaches not only the spouses, but the family born of the covenant of the spouses.

Married and family life finds meaning and significance in the cross which is the sign of the self-giving of the new covenant and which helps us live the new covenant sealed in Christ and with his blood. Married life is an opportunity for each husband and wife to leave something behind, to renounce personal interests and take up the cross.

Family life brings with it at times sorrows, sufferings and deep pain which might not be well accepted and which put the stability of the family in danger. How to give meaning to suffering? We should look to Christ for the significance and meaning of his self-gift. Christ did not live his life for himself, but for us, from his Incarnation “for us

by Lily Karina Osorio Valdivia
Andrés Diamante Navarro
Verónica García Villegas

and for our salvation” until his death “for our sins” (I Cor 15,3). The husband or wife, the father or mother should give him/herself for the other and has to renounce him/herself.

The spirituality of the blood carries this dimension of denying. “If anyone wants to come after me, let him/her deny him/herself, take

Blood? How do we bring them about?

Without a doubt the answers are in a certain way determined by the environment of each one of us. We live in a country whose majority is Christian, in which Protestantism in its distinct denominations is a minority, but thriving, in which we enjoy the freedom of worship; we are a free society and we live in peace. In this environment we ask ourselves: What does the Blood of Christ demand of us? We look to



The participants of MERLAP III enjoying the hospitality of the Italian Province

up the cross and follow me.” (Mt 16,24).

The paschal mystery of Christ is present and becomes alive in the life of the spouses and in family life in the sicknesses of children or their death, when we suffer poverty, when we have to reconcile with each other, ask pardon as spouses, as family. Christ is present in family life redeeming us.

OUR COMMITMENTS AND OBLIGATIONS

What are the objectives sought by the spirituality of the Precious

the representative symbols of the three great themes of the spirituality of the blood: The Covenant, the Cross and the Cup.

The *Covenant* speaks of relationship in recognizing God as the creator and foundation of the world. As children of God we are united to all things. How does it define our actions? With respect to creation and nature, respect and love towards our neighbor, but also toward that one who is far away and whom we do not see, but who is our brother, since we have one and the same Father. This makes

us missionaries, in that we do not wait sitting down, but that we get moving and go where we were needed.

The *Cross* speaks of relationship in recognizing the sacrifice of Christ for our salvation. We should be sensitive to the pain and be responsible for the one who suffers, accompany them and hopefully help them in their redemption. As a school, we did so and helped a great deal after the 2010 earthquake. Priests, professors, students, representatives went not once, but many times to the area affected in order to lend help. We showed that charity is not just a word to be spoken, but to be put into action.

The *Cup* makes reference to the Blood paid by Christ for a new, eternal covenant, and perfect because the price paid for it was perfect. It invites us to share in the sacramental life of the Church as individuals and as family. We should pray, ask forgiveness for our sins and be reconciled.

THE BLOOD SHEDDINGS OF JESUS

And what do our devotions teach us? What goals do the blood sheddings of Jesus point out to us?

As parents and as family we should accept the trials and sorrows that we face in our lives and offer them to Christ in the cup of the Eucharist (first mystery). We should persevere in family prayer in spite of our sorrows and pains, the inconveniences, the tiredness and weariness. We should hand ourselves over to the will of the Father (second mystery). We should be ready and open to help those who suffer or are unjustly punished, those who are victims of abuse and violence, those who are rejected by society (third mystery). We have to make forgiveness of sin a reality in life. We should not only forgive but also love the one who offends or attacks us, love our enemy no matter how grave the offense might be (fourth mystery). Like Simon of Cirene, we should help to carry the cross of so many



St. Gaspar invites us to read frequently “the book of the Cross”

sisters and brothers for whom the cross is too heavy and unbearable (fifth mystery). The shedding of Jesus’ blood in the crucifixion teaches us that it is never too late to repent of our faults and return to the Father who is quick to forgive us and receive us into his reign just like the good thief crucified at Jesus’ side (Lk 23,39-43). We are all one family as children of one Father. May we be worthy children because God sent his son to die for us (sixth mystery). In the blood and the water that come forth from the side of Christ opened by the wound of the lance we have two powerful symbols: the blood which saves and the water which purifies, both symbols of the sacraments designed by God for our salvation.

CONCLUSION

It is in the family where we experience the grace of being a small Church and as such we should live and celebrate the paschal mystery. We celebrate and live the sacraments. The family is the privileged place for the encounter with Christ.

In the family we experience the grace of the redemption. We experience the love of the Lord who gave himself for us when we love as a family. We experience the grace of forgiveness when we reconcile. We experience the grace of compassion and mercy when we take on the suffering of one of the members. Then the family as the domestic Church becomes the sign of the presence of the Reign of God by the power of the paschal mystery, by the power of the redeeming blood. The home is thus the first school of the Christian life and “the school of the richest humanism” (*Gaudium et spes* 52,1). Here is learned patience, the joy of work, fraternal love, generous forgiveness, even repeatedly, and above all the divine worship through prayer and the offering of one’s life.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*)

In conclusion, the spirituality of the blood helps us to live married and family life in a deep relationship with the Lord who denied himself, who gave himself totally for us, who filled us with blessings by his cross and his blood. ♦

ing work of the Church. According to the “royal dignity” with which they have been invested, “they are permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church.”

In October the Synod on the New Evangelization will convene and Pope Benedict XVI has declared as a “Year of Faith” the period from October 2012 through November 2013. In presenting the Year of Faith Archbishop Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization, remarked: “In the present context, characterized by a secularism that promotes ‘living in the world as if God did not exist,’ the Year of Faith is proposed as a path that the Christian community offers to those many people who live with a nostalgia for God and a desire to encounter God anew. The objectives pointed out by the Pope for the Year of Faith in the Apostolic Letter *Porta fidei* are followed by a program that involves the ordinary life of every believer and ordinary pastoral ministry in giving life to the new evangelization.” The Year of Faith is a year that challenges all to find the path for a new evangelization that is to be an element of common participation for the growth of the Church. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Christi-fideles laici*, one sees the strong connection between the identity of the laity and the processes of evangelization: Proclaiming the Gospel, the lay faithful participate in the mission of serving persons and society by practicing charity, the soul and sustenance of solidarity. Service of the person and of society means essentially promoting the dignity of the person, respecting the person’s inviolable right to life, freely calling on the name of the Lord and seeking the evangelization of culture and of cultures (cf. # 36-40).

Our Congregation was born from an association formed largely of lay people dedicated to the devotion to the Blood of Christ, the Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood. We must never forget this. In addition, our Founder, Saint Gaspar, always established associations of the laity at the conclusion of the missions he preached in so many places in Italy.

The aim of these associations was to continue the mission and make the mission living and effective in the time afterward in order to keep alive and active the fire kindled during the mission. The association of lay people linked to our missionary life and to our spirituality has always been a living reality in our Congregation and especially since the Council there have been new visions in the various units of the Congregation that have created new kinds of associations.

The General Curia called together representatives of the groups of lay people associated with our Congregation to meet in July 2012. They are people who live the spirituality of the Blood of Christ along with us and who work with us in evangelization. This was the third MERLAP to meet in Rome. The participation was noteworthy and representatives of the majority of our units worldwide came to the meeting. The particular theme this year was the situation of young people: how to attract and

people, how to involve them, or better, how to involve ourselves with their lives, their desires and above all their dreams.

The articles that you will read in this edition examine this problem. They speak of youth in a positive way, as persons capable of being attracted by values and who are capable of bold and generous responses.

Prof. José L. Moral, of the Salesian University of Rome, asks us what kind of associations and what kind of youth we want in the historic moment in which we find ourselves. He invites us to accept social, cultural and religious pluralism to avoid the risk of thinking about a Christianity that would relegate society and culture to the margins. He invites us to be well acquainted with the mode of being and of living of the young of our time so that we will not think of spirituality as “something religious” that is not linked to the anthropological processes and realities of daily life.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Jerome Stack (editor), *The Spirituality of the Blood: Our Mission in Defense of the Earth Community / La Espiritualidad de la Sangre y la Misión en Defensa de Nuestra Casa Común* (Proceedings of the C.P.P.S. International Symposium, Lima, Perú, 2010). Dayton, Ohio: Missionaries of the Precious Blood, 2012. Volume 33 of the C.P.P.S. Resources Series. This is a bilingual publication.

Tullio Veglianti (editor), *Il Sangue di Cristo nella Bibbia, Commento dei Padri della Chiesa. Continuation Mediaevalis and Vangelo Secondo Luca e Giovanni*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Citta del Vaticano 2011-2012.

The Web Site of the International Center of Precious Blood Spirituality is now up and running: www.icpbs.org

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

involve the young in our spirituality and our mission.

The theme grew out of the two preceding meetings of the lay associates. Our various units are sensitive to the participation of the laity and to the vocation of the young, but they have encountered challenges in knowing how to deal with young

Don Domenico D’Alia, director of pastoral ministry with youth of the Italian Province, asks us to help young people to understand that faith comes from God and that it is for the human person, and that the first form of faith is faith in life. He affirms that “The experience of faith, which we Missionaries are called to offer from

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The full texts of the conferences given at MERLAP III can be found on the C.P.P.S. web page: www.mission-preciousblood.org

our spirituality, is not a faith that is exclusively contemplative, but a dynamic, active faith, which spends itself in the world and allows itself to be questioned by the world, a faith that is not afraid of getting its hands dirty and that speaks with clarity of humanity and its mystery.”

The theme of youth is important for carrying out our mission. Young people are not only the object of our mission, but ought to become sub-

jects of the mission, those who are carrying out the mission.

This theme is equally important for understanding our spirituality. Young people live in the context of their world. They can be submerged

by their world or they can become critical in their encounters with it.

It is in this capacity of the openness of the young person to hear the voices that are heard in the world that our voice can also be inserted, if it is a voice that is able to distinguish itself from the others, that is able to give courage, that is able to offer challenges, and that cannot be stifled by other voices.

The new evangelization that is proclaimed as a challenge in today's world, oppressed by many voices, so discordant as to become a cacophony, is a commitment not only to proclaim the message of Christ in words but with the witness of life, because this is a message of love and friendship for all. Love and friendship are not proclaimed with words: one lives them. Young people, like so many of us, can become tired of words and at times we no longer can comprehend their meaning even when they are true and are born of a profound conviction of faith and love.

The new evangelization means first of all our will to understand and to make understood the intrinsic character of the saving action of God, in history and in daily life that is given precisely by “newness.”

The Gospel is always something that is not edited, that is different, that is surprising in the worldly scenario in which it is inserted.

It is important that all of us be aware of the absolute youthfulness of the Gospel (which is incomparable to the changeable and senescent ideologies it encounters) and of its eternal and living capacity to renew hearts, cultures and history. ♦

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“A glorious history to remember”

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