



The Cup of the New Covenant

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD
No. 23, December 2007

General Assembly 2007

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

This issue of *The Cup of the New Covenant* is being published two months late. The reason is simple: there has been a change in the general administration of the [Congregation of] Missionaries of the Precious Blood which publishes this magazine. This change took place last July during their General Assembly. The new administration did not have the time to publish this issue in October.

The new members of this administration introduce themselves and ask for your prayers and your support in this ministry to which they were called by the General Assembly, so that they can carry it out with a sense of service for the entire Congregation and so that they may guide it, especially with the witness of their lives and of their vision.

The articles published in this edition of *The Cup* are part of the reports

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Opening Celebration

The Challenges facing International Societies of Apostolic Life Today

ADDRESS TO THE XIX GENERAL ASSEMBLY CPPS

by Seamus Freeman, sac.

INTRODUCTION

To speak about the challenges facing “International Societies of Apostolic Life Today”, we must understand the concrete meaning of these words. So, I would take the word “challenge” to mean both a threat and an opportunity. The word “international” is a word of shifting meaning. A decade or so ago it meant the rich diversity of a similar presence throughout the world. Today, it would refer also to the forces that tend to diminish diversity, forces promoted by the opportunities and the ambiguities of globali-

sation. Such forces can be both a threat and an opportunity for Societies of Apostolic Life. The essential characteristics of a Society of Apostolic Life are:

- a unique apostolic project;
- a specific type of fraternal life in community;
- an aspiration for the perfection of charity;
- a particular rule of life;
- without religious vows.

Then there is the little word “today”, a little word with a big meaning.

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and conferences that guided the General Assembly and the understanding of its central theme: a government for the next six years, 2007-2013.

The first article is part of the conference of Fr. Seamus Freeman, SAC, former Superior General of the Pallotines and coordinator of the lay associates of their congregation. At this time I would like to extend to him my most sincere good wishes for the new ministry to which the Church has called him: to be bishop of the Diocese of Ossory in Ireland. Fr. Freeman is a good friend of our Congregation and knows its dynamics. His conference emphasized the challenges that an international society of the apostolic life like ours must face in today's world. His conference, indeed, guided the whole Assembly and was the object of personal reflection and of discussions in the groups and plenary sessions. The emphasis of the themes of love, presence, identity, community, international collaboration, formation, ecumenical dialogue, and collaboration with lay people facilitated a new awareness on the part of all of the participants.

The second article comprises the last part of the report of the outgoing Moderator General, Fr. Barry Fischer, CPPS. It is the section in which Barry, in the light of all of the eighteen years of his experience in guiding the Congregation, first as a counselor and then as Moderator General, invites [us] to consider those points, some new and others pending, which are important and which, I would say, are essential for the steady leadership of the Congregation as it moves toward

the new times that are unfolding in the immediate future: creative fidelity, prophecy, demographic change, new foundations, interregional collaboration, a new concept of mission, of community and of spirituality, preparation of new leaders, and lay associates.

The third and last article is the message which the members of the Assembly wished to address to all of their confreres, to our lay associates, and to all persons of good will who with us wish to extend the reign of God with the charism, ministry, and the mission of the Congregation. The message develops in depth the atmosphere of the entire Assembly and seeks to reveal the spirit that guided the Assembly, emphasizing once again the three pillars on which the charism that distinguishes us as CPPS Missionaries is based: mission, community, and spirituality.

In this message the members of the Assembly wish to point out, espe-

cially to the general administration, but also to all of the Missionaries and to all who live the charism of the Congregation, especially the lay associates and our many friends, that to make these three pillars new and living realities each day is essential if we wish to be persons aware of the signs of the times and distinctive by our unique identity and by a mission which opens itself to the world with an open heart, an attentive mind, and by concrete action in response to the necessities of those who are most in need.

This article presenting the issue is of necessity short so as not to take editorial space from the three articles that we want to present in their entirety.

I only wish to invite the reader to read them very carefully as a sign of attention to the importance they have for participating in the ongoing renewal which the Congregation proposes. ♦

NEW PUBLICATIONS

C.P.P.S.: An Apostolic Community under the sign of the Blood of Christ. Post Visitation Letters, 2001-2007. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S. (Roma, Italy: Curia Generalizia CPPS, 2007).

Assalto ai Castelli Romani, Michele Colagiovanni, C.P.P.S. (Albano Laziale, Italy: Primavera Missionaria, 2007).

Poster of the CPPS Living Members, Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S. (Roma, Italy: Curia Generalizia CPPS, 2007).

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

«... to make these three pillars new and living realities each day is essential if we wish to be persons aware of the signs of the times and distinctive by our unique identity and by a mission which opens itself to the world with an open heart, an attentive mind, and by concrete action in response to the necessities of those who are most in need.»

“Today” refers to the present state of affairs, the actual situation. Where am I now? Which influences are moving me, and in which direction. This can also mean the hidden situation, perhaps a situation regarding which we have little or no awareness.

Therefore, I think that for the purposes of this talk we can take the word “today” to mean: *a real presence; a focused attention; a connectedness to all the essentials, spiritual and apostolic, that are part of your authentic identity.* To put it in other words, for the sake of greater clarity: “today” is the evangelical attention, by means of faith and reason, that we give, offer, and dedicate, to all that is happening in every moment of our history. At the end of this talk, my hope would be that each of you will have an enriched consciousness of the deep and evangelical meaning of the phrase – “... to be **a real presence**”.

2. In a world of ever-greater participation in decision-making, in a world where free speech and freedom of choice are declared human rights, it is also true that, today, people are becoming aware of the weakness and fragility of such freedoms. In order that people might vote for truth and not for self-interest, we must have a permanently focused connectedness with the spiritual essentials of the revival of faith and the re-enchaining of charity. The mystic lets God decide. The mystic is one who ponders the hidden meaning of God’s word wherever he or she is. The mystic is a cornerstone that can cope with any future, while at the same time avoiding being trapped in any past. There is a universal call to holiness. Holiness is another word for mysticism. Authentic apostles are mystical. Authentic mystics are apostolic – two sides of the one evangelical coin. These reflections were in my mind as I prepared this address. I will now speak of some of the challenges that I feel are very essential if any Institute is to succeed in maintaining a dynamic fidelity to one’s spiritual and apostolic heritage. I hope that these reflections can help

animate the discussions and illuminate your reflections with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

3. The first contemporary challenge I wish to present is very central to the very nature of being a Christian. It applies to every Society of Apostolic Life because each Apostolic Society is a way of being Church. The soul, the driving force and *essential constituent* of each and every religious community has to be *the authentic spirit of the most perfect love.* This is love according to Chapter thirteen of the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians. By means of such love, our Societies participate in the dynamic process of the merciful love of the Holy Trinity. We know this love when we know and follow Jesus Christ, Apostle of the Eternal Father.

«The great question for our communities: How can we concretise the desire of the heart of God? “Concretise” means having an intimate relationship with God’s word, knowing one’s personal vocation, concrete objectives, all directed to the task of evangelisation.»

In those hearts where charity is not well formed, Jesus Christ is not to be found. In this context, the word “heart” refers to the centre of man, the place where the unity of man is found, and symbol of the love that saves (cf. Herbert Vorgrimler, *Nuovo Dizionario Teologico*, EDB 2004). The desire of the heart of God is his covenant of infinite love and mercy with all of humankind. In other words, the love of God is unconditional love. Jesus is the incarnation of this love, and as the Father sent him, so he sends us, to love with the love of God (cf. Jn. 20:21). However, the word love, in the world of today, has become a very ambiguous word. Why is this?

4. Before we can build a civilisation of love in the world of today, that being our clear call as Christians, it is first of all necessary to look at the contemporary understanding of the word love. In a recent left-wing political journal (UK), an article

appeared with the title: “How we forgot the art of loving” (cf. *New Statesman*, 14 February 2005). The article is based on the writings of the social philosopher, Erich Fromm, writing more than fifty years ago. According to Fromm, “every society produces the character it needs”. Early Calvinistic capitalism produced the “hoarding character”. Postwar capitalism produced the “marketing character” that “adapts to the marketing economy by becoming detached from authentic emotions, truth and conviction”. For the marketing character “everything is transformed into a commodity, not only things, but the person himself, his physical energy, his skills, his knowledge, his opinions, his feelings, even his smiles”. The conclu-

sion of the article is “that fifty years on, contemporary, turbo-capitalist Britain confirms the belief that a healthy economy is possible only at the price of unhealthy human beings”. Yes, there has been an unprecedented period of economic growth. Yet, mental health has declined sharply. More than two million people are on anti-depressants, and “acts of destruction” – violence, self-abuse and vandalism – have reached record levels. Success is seen in purely material terms. Human well-being is no longer the priority. We are encouraged to view all human contacts and contracts as expendable, to be “traded in” whenever we can get a better deal.

5. I am sure that one should not run to the easier conclusion, by simply blaming capitalism, or some other ideology for all our problems. However, one cannot just passively wait for change for the better to spontaneously happen. We must cre-

actively await, hope and expect. We must have no fear. It is more a question of being aware of the real dangers and challenges of various economic and cultural systems and then having the courage to take up the challenges of new evangelisation and re-evangelisation. There are indeed many signs today indicating that the Church can respond, and is doing so. The great question for our communities: How can we concretise the desire of the heart of God? It is first of all necessary to have a clear understanding of what we mean by the word “concretise”. It does not mean having an opinion, or having an interest or hobby. It means having an intimate relationship with God’s word, knowing one’s personal vocation, concrete objectives, all of course directed to the task of evangelisation. I will give a partial response to this question, and I challenge the Chapter to amplify and develop this response.

6. We can concretise the desire of the heart of God in the following ways:

- a) We must love as God loves. We must love as Jesus loves. We must love as our Founder loved. To do this we must have concrete and solid programmes of formation for all members, formation that transforms;
- b) An apostle is one who is sent. Every authentic Christian community becomes ever more mis-

sionary. Members of the new movements and Associations of the faithful feel the call to be missionaries. On the contrary, many traditional Institutes suffer a grave, if not fatal, decline in vocations, and in genuine missionary thrust. There is a growth in individualism. Instead of love as compassion and mercy becoming concrete mission initiatives, we have the lethargy of passivity and maintenance;

- c) We can also concretise the desire of the heart of God by attending to the priority of developing a family of vocations around the ecclesial content of the charism of the founder. When the meaning of the great Christian word “love”, is ambiguous, the greatest victim is the family. God’s love is compassion, that is, the will and wish to suffer with whoever suffers. God’s love is mercy; the will and wish to be a suffering heart “of precious blood”, (i.e. genuinely life giving) before the suffering of another.

To be Christian means having a heartfelt love that is a fundamental option for the other. When love is self-centred, family has very little chance of survival. In many European countries, the average life of a marriage is between 7 and 11 years. The same reality is emerging for vocations to the Consecrated

Life. Family is in crisis. This has to be one of our greatest priorities. Indeed, it is surprising today the number of people who do not believe that stable family life is the very cornerstone of progress and survival. It is important that we listen to the appeal of the European Synod of Bishops (cf. EE 94): “*Families, become what you are... a living sign of God’s love... a sanctuary of life ... the foundation of Society*”. It is said that the rapid development of the age of technology is the main cause of the present crisis of the family.

Technology is leading to individualism, a phenomenon that leads to the attempt to be self-sufficient persons, an attempt that leads to the isolation of the person. Even the great symbolic meeting-place – the meal table is all too often an abandoned table. The crisis of the family is having negative effects on all vocations, on concepts such as solidarity and community/communion. When the family table is empty, the Eucharistic Table will also be empty – that is what seems to be happening in many places. “*Evidence of the loosening of family bonds is unequivocal*” (cf. Robert D. Putman, *Bowling Alone* (Simon and Schuster, 2000)). On the basis of such evidence, it is no exaggeration to say that the crisis of



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«A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God.»

the family (within our communities and beyond) has to be one of the main priorities for the future;

d) Last, but not least, I would like to draw your attention to number 43 of the Church's programme for the Third Millennium (Novo Millennio Ineunte; Pope John Paul II, 6 January 2001). The title of this number is: A spirituality of Communion – To make the Church *the home and the school of communion*. Our fidelity to this programme would be one of the best possible ways of implementing our understanding of "Family of God". I would like to refer your attention to the five more important indications of the text. 1) *A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us.* 2) *A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as 'those who are a part of me'.* 3) *A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God.* 4) *A spirituality of communion means to know how to 'make room' for our brothers and sisters, bearing 'each other's burdens' and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy.* 5) *Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, 'masks' of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.*

7. The following challenges are much more specific. This does not mean that they are of less importance. They are vitally important. When one aspect of the organism is non-functioning or mal-functioning, the full expression of the entire organism is compromised. These reflections are based on my own experiences of my own community:

a) VOCATIONAL IDENTITY

I entered a Pallottine Minor Seminary at the age of 14. By the time I entered the Novitiate at the age of 19 I already had a strong Pallottine identity. Perseverance was strengthened by family support. In difficult times there was the temptation to leave, but it was harder to leave in those days and so you had the benefit of perseverance to overcome such difficulties.

Today, the situation is very different. Imagine a young person very involved in the charismatic prayer movement. After high school he joins our community. He is happy for a while. Then both he and the formation team experience frustration. The candidate, justifiably so, has a great nostalgia for the charismatic way and strives to experience it as much as possible. The formation team will find it difficult to inculcate a strong identity with the charism of the Institute. This is currently causing many problems. Many of such vocations leave in the first few years after ordination.

«Being nice to one another does not mean knowing or respecting one another. Instant coffee with instant, disposable friends can only further destroy community. Even language is changing in order to accommodate to the new reality of relationships.»

However, this is not the case with the Associations of the Faithful. A vocation from the Sant'Egidio community remains within the spiritual and charismatic atmosphere of the community during formation and also after ordination. The challenge for apostolic communities is to move towards "Family" or "Association" identity. I believe this is the only way to the future. However, I am also aware that there is not great support for such ideas from the clerical branches of such apostolic Families. It is my conviction that this challenge must be addressed, in order to guarantee a future.

b) COMMUNITY CRISIS

With the decline in spiritual exercises together, recreation together, dining together, there is an ever-growing development of individualism in our communities. The very dining-room table is under threat. The concepts of hospitality and welcoming each other is weakening. The same phenomenon is hitting the family world-wide. The resulting individualism leads to not really knowing and understanding one another.

Being nice to one another does not mean knowing or respecting one another. Instant coffee with instant, disposable friends can only further destroy community. Even language is changing in order to accommodate to the new reality of relationships. I once asked an old man in his nineties if he knew a famous local political figure. He gave me a wonderful answer: "I had a knowledge of him, but I didn't know him". To-day "we know" everyone. However, what we really mean is that "we have a knowledge" of them. There is a uni-



Fr. Seamus Freeman talking

verse of difference between the two phrases.

On the other hand, again the ecclesial movements have a very rich experience of communion, community, family and faith-sharing. It is my conviction that the problem to be resolved (with reference to my own community) is to look at the role of the Rector of the Local Community (the responsible for the smallest entity of the Institute). Personal responsibility does not solve problems – it gives freedom. Every group has to have a person with the authority to call the family, the members, together.

In my experience there are at least three types of Community Rector, or Moderator. 1) The Professional – He is a hyper competent administrator. All details of community administration are communicated in detail. He has many other duties. But, he is not present. Everything is organised, posted on the notice board, but, he is

not present; 2) The Co-ordinator – He is present, but takes no responsibility for the questions and problems of the members. In such cases, the Provincial has to take the place of the Local Rector; 3) The Real Presence – This is the Rector who is forever present for the members. This is an urgent priority of the future.

c) INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

In countries with few vocations, it make good sense to try and have international centres whereby there can be the experience of community and the presence of a team of formators. It's not just possible to offer a programme to one or two candidates. A more complex and perhaps more urgent matter is the need of pastoral or missionary collaboration between different Provinces and Vicariates of the Society. I had a good deal of experience with this need and with experiments to make it a viable

response to a growing need. The best way I can explain the fruit of various experiences is to share with you two concrete projects. About 15 years ago, three young priests from Province A went to help Province B. In the same year 3 young priests also from Province A went to open a new mission in country C. Fifteen years later, of the three who went to Province B, 2 are now diocesan priests and the third has left the priesthood. Of the three who went to open a new mission - the three have become s community of at least 18, including a formation programme. There was one essential difference between the two initiatives. Those who went to Province B went to help an ageing community and their collaboration was under the direction of those ageing members. The young members had no real space for their own initiatives and so they became very frustrated in a short time. Those

who founded the new mission had space. Space gave them confidence. They became founders. There is a valid lesson here. Collaboration needs a just space in order for both sides to benefit from such projects for the good of the mission of the Church and the charism of the Institute.

d) SPIRITUAL ANIMATION

Again, I want to just speak from my experience. By animation all the initiatives that go into “keeping the members spiritually alive and enthusiastic”. That would be my definition of on-going formation. From my knowledge of a number of the ecclesial movements I have come to realise that more than 95% of spiritual on-going formation takes place within the community setting. Spiritual animation is totally within the community. This is the very life-blood of the movements. They are not going out to others for help and they grow in confidence to help each other. I can see the need certain kinds of technical ongoing formation outside the community. However, I think it is better when the community itself can provide all the spiritual animation required for its healthy spiritual and apostolic development. Also, when we take a look at the immense amount of resources invested into on-going formation since the Second Vatican Council, I can't see a corresponding result. I don't say that it has been a failure, but I would argue that it has been totally inadequate. That is not an opinion. The results speak for themselves, especially in the areas of spiritual and community renewal.

e) INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, ECUMENISM

The world is rapidly changing and, especially, Inter-Religious Dialogue is rapidly becoming the priority of the moment. The globalisation of migration means that, outside of the Islamic world, every village will be more and more multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious. The lack of contact with others leads to them feeling apart, isolated. Some become

home-grown foreign terrorists. All those who are permanently ignored at least become resentful. This is relatively new mission territory.

f) REAL COLLABORATION WITH LAY FAITHFUL

Where I live, the people's definition of the Church is the Pope and the Bishops, and they don't like that particular Church. In South America recently, Cardinal Humes described the crisis of the Church there as being in the midst of greatest Catholic haemorrhage since the Reformation. On a visit to Bolivia some years ago, I stayed at a hotel in La Cruz. The priest with me told me about the family who owned the hotel, how once they were very good Catholics and then became members of a sect. I had the opportunity to speak with the grandmother of the family. I asked her why she and her family has left the Catholic Church. She said to me very simply that in the Church she is now attending, she has a sense of belonging, she has responsibility, and she has the opportunity to participate in the planning. I feel there is a lot of lay disaffection with the Church. Now, Pope John Paul II, in two different documents, wrote that it will by means of the

charisms of consecrated Life and of apostolic Life that the true role of the lay faithful will be revealed. This is a very fundamental challenge for us for the future.

The Church must not become a caste system. Mind you, there are signs of a growing clericalism in the Church. Here, we have a great opportunity and obligation to get involved in deep communion with the lay faithful. The lay faithful, this sleeping giant has to be rescued from its chronic passivity.

8. Conclusion

“By their fruits you shall know them” (Mt. 7:16). The great challenge for your community is to be a credible witness of its heritage and convictions. This cannot be done in a rush. We must “bring forth fruit with patience” (Lk. 8:15), bearing in mind that “the fruit of the spirit is love (Gal. 5:22). Finally, if we want to live, we must learn to die. “Very truly. I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (in. 12:24). We must die to self, transforming carnal self into a “newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). ♦



The Delegates from the Indian Vicariate lead the Holy Mass

Looking to the future

by Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S.

In his final report to the General Assembly, Fr. Barry Fischer, first of all summed up the major activities undertaken by him and his Council during the period 2001-2007. In the second part of his report he indicated some of the pending tasks left to his successor and his Council. And finally, he states what he sees to be some of the major challenges facing the Congregation as we move into the future. What follows is this third part of his Report to the General Assembly.

Much of my animation during these 12 years as Moderator General has been dedicated to *stretching the mentalities, structures and frame of reference* of our members. I would like to share with you now some of my concerns as I leave office and indicate from my perspective of 18 years in general leadership some areas which we need to develop more and which will need the attention of our new leadership team.

1. During these years we have explored some of the implications of what it means to be a **Society of Apostolic Life**. It has become familiar for us to speak of the three pillars of our identity: mission, community and spirituality. These are the three principal characteristics of a Society of Apostolic Life. The Congregation needs to continue its discussion on the three pillars in light of our identity as a Society of Apostolic Life, to discover how our Precious Blood Spirituality and community life can better serve mission.

2. I promoted an attitude of **creative fidelity** when focusing on our charism, in an ongoing effort to discern the signs of the times and to search for ways to respond to those challenges from the perspective of our mission within the Church. Living in creative fidelity to our congregational charism calls us to **refounding** which means “to give an answer to the cry of the broken world today in creative fidelity to the charism of our founder St. Gaspar”



Fr. Barry gives his report and indicates pending tasks

(Statement of Values #2, XVIII General Assembly, 2004).

Not all have responded favorably to this call. Some members reject outright the idea or are afraid of its implications. Nevertheless I am convinced that this is where religious life is called to be today and that our very future depends on our willingness to be continually refounded. It is a decision for life or death.

3. Implied in the call to refounding is also the call to rediscover **the role of prophecy** in religious life today. Understandably provincials, vicariate and mission directors, spend a great deal of time in administrative duties and problem-solving on a daily basis, and there often remains little time or energy to reflect on prophecy or on the implications of refounding as they face the constant challenge of balancing present commitments (and often with declining numbers and aging membership) and openness to new possibilities in response to the cry of the blood today.

The need to move from a “maintenance model of government” to one of “prophecy” is voiced by a number of our young members and by our candidates in different units. There is a concern that too much time is spent in preserving our institutions and

present structures rather than in building a vibrant future for our young members and candidates of today and of tomorrow. We need to be asking ourselves how we might best pull our human and economic resources to live our mission in today’s world.

4. As we look at the reality of our Congregation around the world we are confronted with the **changing demographics** of the Congregation. On the one hand the congregation experiences a rather strong growth in India and Tanzania, while in the older units particularly in Western Europe and North America, our numbers are dwindling and our membership aging. The challenges this brings to us are many.

In our **young and growing foundations** development of local leadership and government structures is needed that permits and encourages the participation of the members. We need to assure their participation in international gatherings so that they become aware that they are part of a larger picture and a broader C.P.P.S. family. How to incarnate in creative fidelity the charism of the Congregation and at the same time be faithful to our CPPS traditions are questions to be faced as we enter new cultures.

As some Vicariates prepare to become Provinces, the question of economic independence arises. Since most of our growth today is in economically poorer countries, is “economic independence” still a valid criterion which needs to be met before becoming a Province? If not, then how would their economic support be provided for? Perhaps we need to explore a kind of economic solidarity in which our material resources are shared among all the units, especially with those most in need. These growing foundations also need to address the issue of how they can discover local resources for financing their mission.

At the same time, our **older and diminishing units** face another set of challenges. What does it mean for the internal life of the community and for ministry when its memberships dwindle and the number of places we serve in a Province is very limited? How does the local community live in such circumstances the three pillars of our identity: mission, community, and spirituality? Does a Province have sufficient number of members to be able to have the needed change-over in positions of leadership and to fulfill the very important ministry of formation for our candidates? Such situations which are occurring now in several of our Provinces should encourage us to greater collaboration and support among us all. Those units which have founded missions must develop a plan for supporting their missions even as their own economic resources diminish.

5. A recurring theme in my reflections, conferences and writings during these years is the invitation to think in broader terms, across our traditional boundaries of provinces, vicariates and missions. It is an invitation to think globally as an international family in which we are all responsible for one another.

We have surely grown a lot over these years in our sense of belonging to an international congregation. One expression of this growing awareness is the **collaboration across the boundaries** of our present units. As we hear the reports of the different units this week, we will realize just how much collaboration is taking place as well as the challenges implied in such collaboration.

Regional gatherings can be a good instance of promoting dialogue among the membership and collaborative efforts in mission (cf Resolution 5 of XVIII General Assembly). A question that should be asked at all levels of the Congregation and in the Regions is: how can we best pull our human and economic resources to live our mission today?

6. Living in creative fidelity to our founder’s charism is a call to **broaden our understanding of mission**. The XVIII General Assembly moved us a step forward when it declared in the Statement of Values that “*We recognize working for justice, peace, human life, and the integrity of creation is an integral part of the ministry of the Word in a spirituality of the Blood of Christ as an expression of Catholic social teaching.*” (# 11). The Congregation cannot limit itself to what we are doing now or always have done. Prophecy is born on the frontiers among the poor and the abandoned. To hear the cry and to respond to the call of the Blood would expand our understanding of mission. We continue to pray to St. Gaspar: “help us to discern the needs of our times and to discover how to respond to them.”

In practically all my post-visitation letters I have called the membership to **openness to new ministries**. This call is not always understood by the members who often cannot understand why we talk about beginning new apostolates when we don’t have enough personnel to maintain the ones we already have. The XVIII General Assembly made a bold Statement when it declared that “*As a Congregation we are ready to respond to the call of the Holy Father to go where no one else would go and to undertake missions which seem unpromising.*” (#12) As Missionaries of the Word where are the *new areopagoi* calling for our presence? What concrete responses are we giving?

7. There is a constant necessity to reflect upon **our understanding of community**. Our members have different understanding of its meaning and bring to community life different expectations. Religious life today has moved away from the understanding of community as simply living under the same roof and following the same schedule to one of a community based on *relation-*

ships, dialogue, and participation in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. The latter seems to me to be much more in harmony with a *spirituality of the covenant in the Blood of Christ* which we claim to live. We are constantly challenged to promote the building of *hospitable communities* truly open to the other as a way of living in *the bond of charity*.

A particular challenge to us as an international congregation is to discover the prophetic value of community living which is intergenerational, intercultural and international. The very witness of living community in such diversity is in itself mission! To live in such intercultural and international communities requires formation both at the initial and ongoing formation levels.

8. A concern for myself and the members of the General Council has been **the number of members who leave the Congregation**. Many of them are young. This concern is one which is shared by all the Congregations today and has been the subject of two of our semi-annual meetings of the Union of Superiors General. We need to ask ourselves what is happening? Why do some of our young men decide to leave us in their first years of ministry? I realize that the issue is complex, but it is one that we must reflect on. What can we do to better the environment of community in our respective units so as to favor fidelity?

9. Just as there are different models of mission in the congregation there is also a variety of **models of exercising authority**. At times this has been cause of tension and frustration between the Moderator and some superiors. One aspect of my ministry of animation has been to call our leadership to leave behind a hierarchical model of authority to embrace one of *servant leadership*, based on the Gospel with Christ as our model. Servant leadership favors accompaniment, listening, creating safe spaces for dialogue and sharing and promotes participation. How can we grow in our understanding and our living this model of authority?

There is also the question of how to **prepare our leadership** and to support our newly elected superiors. More needs to be done to give orientation to those who are elected and

new to this ministry. Can something be done on the level of General Leadership? Perhaps a period of orientation could be offered to our newly elected Directors at the Generalate as some Congregations do. During this time procedural matters could be discussed as well as the general guidelines for the Congregation. Above all, a better relationship between the directors and the General Curia can be established to favor more **effective communication** between the General Leadership and the leadership of our Provinces, Vicariates, and Missions.

10. Mention must be made of the need to prepare members to assume **the ministry of formation** of our membership, both the formation of our candidates and the ongoing formation of our members. There seems to be a consensus today in religious life that the initial formation of our candidates and the ongoing forma-

enriched and found new life and purpose in sharing with the laity our C.P.P.S. charism. The recent Meeting of Representatives of Lay Associate Programs (MERLAP II) in Rome was evidence that the Blood of Christ speaks to people today and inspires them to a fuller following of Christ. While work has obviously been going on in the Provinces, Vicariates, and Missions, we have not done much reflecting on this phenomenon on an international level. Perhaps the time has come for us to examine the question of lay participation and their relationship with us. Could a special General Assembly could be called during the next period of General Government to discuss this important item, with the presence of lay representatives in the Assembly?

Another concern is that we need to encourage the lay associates to develop a “lay spirituality of the

discovering and living the spirituality and to help others discover this treasure for their own lives.

However, a need around the world is to discover the *connections* between the concept and our everyday lives. Much more needs to be done on this level. The call of the last General Assembly to establish an International Center of Precious Blood Spirituality and Regional Centers of Spirituality is a clear sign of the importance given to this aspect of our identity by the members and lay associates/companions. Hopefully these Centers can eventually offer some practical tools for discovering how to live the spirituality in our everyday lives and commitments.

CONCLUSION

As I conclude this Report permit me to express to all of you a word of deep appreciation. I have served in international leadership now for eighteen years, first as General Councilor for six years, and now for twelve years as Moderator General. What I have shared with you here are some of the reflections I make upon the experiences lived during these years in which I have been privileged to serve you.

I thank you for your welcoming and supportive attitude towards me and for your encouragement throughout these years. I have truly been enriched and blessed by you. I also have been challenged by you to grow and to be stretched.

Even though I will be moving on to face new adventures and challenges, I hope to continue to serve you internationally. But I feel it is time to “let go” and I would encourage others to take up the call to leadership on the international level. The next Moderator General will bring his own gifts and talents to his ministry of animation.

I truly am grateful for the achievements over these years and am encouraged by your continued support. I believe that there is a “*a glorious future*” ahead of us that will be made possible by the contributions of each one of us and of every member, be he young or old, healthy or infirm. We are bearers of a priceless treasure which we are called to cherish and to help others discover.

May St. Gaspar continue to walk with us and encourage us in our mission! ♦

«Around the world, the C.P.P.S. has been enriched over the years by the **presence of dedicated lay women and men** who wish to live our charism. This is a sign of the times in which we live.»

tion of our members must be a continuum, or as one theologian described it in a recent Assembly of Superiors General, it must be like a “seamless garment”. If the entire community is not engaged in a permanent formation in our three pillars, then the ground is ripe for conflict and frustrations which can then lead to abandonment and loss of vocation. Our formators must be well prepared to deal with the complex issues of formation in light of our increasing cultural diversity and internationality. Those who minister in formation must be afforded all the preparation necessary in order to fulfill their role.

11. Around the world, the C.P.P.S. has been enriched over the years by the **presence of dedicated lay women and men** who wish to live our charism. This is a sign of the times in which we live. I have been able to witness how many of our communities have been greatly

Precious Blood,” that is, they need not adopt a “religious style,” but one which inspires their presence in the family, in the workplace, in society. The temptation is for us to transmit to them our “clerical style” and for them to imitate our models of prayer, etc., rather than find their own way as committed laity in the Church, inspired by the spirituality of the Blood of Christ.

12. The spirituality of the Precious Blood is a gift for all the Church. There has been a great renewal in the Congregation in this aspect. We have grown over the years from an understanding of Precious Blood in purely devotional terms to discovering it as a spirituality which inspires us in the following of Christ and gives direction and meaning to our lives and commitments. Motivating the members and lay associates/companions in the spirituality has been a centerpiece of animation during my years as Moderator General. We are called to share with one another how we are

MESSAGE OF THE XIX GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

Rome, 27 July 2007

We, the members of the Nineteenth General Assembly of the Congregation of Missionaries of the Precious Blood, have spent two weeks in Rome, in prayer, study, and dialogue. In the spirit of our Founder, St. Gaspar, we have attempted “to be alert to discover the signs of the times” (CPPS Normative Texts, C 32).

The theme of the Assembly has been “Leadership for the CPPS.” As we listened to the reports of the Moderator General and of the Directors of the Provinces, Vicariates, and Missions, it became clear to us how crucial good leaders are for the health of our community life as well as for the vitality of our mission. Our Directors shared with us the strengths and successes of their Provinces, Vicariates, and Missions, and were candid in assessing the areas where change and growth are needed.

During the first week of our gathering we prepared carefully for the elections. We wanted to have a clear sense of the challenges to our apostolic life as well as to our internal life as a Congregation so that we could identify those qualities that would be needed by leaders in our general government to help all of our members to address these challenges. We believe that we have elected men who will be servant leaders (cf. Luke 22, 25-27), helping us to be faithful to our charism.

To aid our new Moderator and General Councilors, we had a significant discussion about a model for the next six years of general government, trying to balance the

need for a healthy community life at the Generalate with the need to invite people with a diversity of skills and gifts to serve on the general leadership team.

In the revision of our Normative Texts, we have tried to be faithful to the mandate of the XVIII General Assembly, which called us to “review the Constitutions and Statutes to include language of mission, reconciliation, and interna-

«We wanted to have a clear sense of the challenges to our apostolic life as well as to our internal life as a Congregation so that we could identify those qualities that would be needed by leaders in our general government to help all of our members to address these challenges.»

tionality as well as to better reflect who we are today” (Resolution 13.4, Statement of Values and Proposals).

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

After hearing the reports of the Major Superiors and Directors of our Missions on Tuesday and Wednesday of the first week, we spent a day in dialogue with Fr. Séamus Freeman, former superior general of the Pallotines, a society of apostolic life like our Congregation. He reminded us that authentic apostles are mystics and that they must incarnate the love of God through self-giving. He called us to remember the words of John Paul II: to make the Church the

home and the school of communion (Novo millennio ineunte, 43). He also challenged us to deepen our sense of identity as members of the Congregation and to genuine collaboration with one another and with the lay faithful.

In response to his presentations, three of the members of the Assembly offered their response in a panel discussion, basing their comments on what they had heard

in the reports from the Major Superiors and Directors of our Missions. Although there have been successes and substantial growth in many areas, there remain pressing issues that we should address.

EVANGELIZATION AND RE-EVANGELIZATION must be priorities for our Congregation. Proclaiming the Word is at the heart of our mission. Our Normative Texts remind us that we are dedicated “to the service of the Church through the apostolic and missionary activity of the word” (C 3) and also state that the Congregation “dedicates itself to the ministry of the word according to the spirit of our Founder” (C 24). Many spoke of the urgency of proclaiming the

gospel especially among the young, who constitute such a large part of the population of many developing countries.

Evangelization is not limited to the ministry of preaching the word of God in the narrow sense. It also involves proclaiming the gospel in a variety of ways. Pursuing justice, seeking peace, and care for creation are all part of evangelization or re-evangelization. We have noted the need for a ministry of reconciliation, a work that certainly is central to our Precious Blood spirituality. We recognized that the ministry of the word, of evangelization, also involves the powerful witness of the word of our lives, especially the witness of community. If we do not live the message we preach, our witness will not be effective.

VOCATIONAL AND FORMATION MINISTRIES continue to be areas that call for attention. For some areas of the Congregation, the decline of vocations has been significant. For other areas, vocations have grown. We need to explore together how to attract more men to the CPPS.

We also must seek ongoing evaluation and improvement in the forma-

«We recognized that the ministry of the word, of evangelization, also involves the powerful witness of the world of our lives, especially the witness of community. If we do not live the message we preach, our witness will not be effective.»

tion of members, not only prior to their incorporation and/or ordination, but as a lifelong task. Issues of international or interregional formation must be explored, not only to provide a sufficient number of candidates for a good experience in formation, but also to foster that “vocational identity” named by Fr. Freeman. Members also noted the importance of formation for living a healthy celibate life for candidates and members alike.

OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE AND THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST must be central to the lives of each member and to our communities. We cannot “concretize the desire of the heart of God” in our ministry unless we know God’s heart through our prayer, through the mysticism of contemplation which is our voca-

tion. As a society of apostolic life we are oriented to action, but we must constantly remind ourselves that our action must be rooted in “the still point in a turning world” as one modern poet has written.

Along these lines, we have the possibility of developing the deep riches of our Precious Blood spirituality around the theme of *caritas*, self-giving love. This can be for us a significant stimulus to a more vibrant community life as well as enhance our ministry of proclaiming the word. As Pope Benedict XVI has reminded us: “the exercise of charity is an action of the Church as such, and that, like the ministry of Word and Sacrament, it too has been an essential part of her mission from the very beginning (*Deus caritas est*, 32).

The refounding of our Congregation – understood as the ongoing



Delegates busy with the Assembly

renewal that is the hallmark of any healthy religious congregation – must find its ground in personal spiritual renewal and the spiritual renewal of local communities. We recognize that refounding is not mainly a matter of modifying structures but rather of dreaming new dreams and having new visions (cf. Joel 3, 1).

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN “NORTH” AND “SOUTH” in the Congregation continues to be a source of both blessing as well as of some tension. The South, understood as those areas of the CPPS mainly south of the equator that are “developing” countries, has generally seen a growth in members and in a willingness of those members to leave their countries to serve in other cultures. This missionary spirit is certainly a wonderful testimony to all the members.

At the same time, many in the South wonder if those in the North really understand them, their cultures, their aspirations, and ask if their “older brothers” in the North trust them to carry forward the charism and mission of our Founder.

Beyond this, there is also the question of the sharing of resources and of self-sufficiency. Some units in developing nations or areas lack the resources to become completely independent. At the same time, older units in the North are concerned about the decrease in numbers and possible loss of the

UPCOMING EVENTS

International Centre of Precious Blood Spirituality

in Salzburg, Austria
Director Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S
beginning in Summer 2008

Meeting of the CPPS Major Superiors and Mission Directors with the Moderator General and General Council

Bangalore, India November 3-7, 2008

resources that help sustain the younger units in developing countries.

COLLABORATION received much attention in our discussions. True collaboration means trusting in the wisdom and skills of others, treating them as equals in planning and carrying out our mission. Developing collaborative models of leadership and of living and working together continues to be a pressing need.

In this regard, collaboration with the laity was an important thread running through the dialogue. The role of the brother in the CPPS could be especially significant in promoting such collaboration. At the same time, we recognize that the laity need to develop their own unique manner of living Precious Blood spirituality.

The recent experience of the meeting of representatives of our lay associations in June 2007 (“MER-

LAP II”) clearly demonstrates the growth of this important apostolate and the desire of many of the lay faithful to share in our spirituality and our mission.

Finally, the Assembly REVIEWED AND REVISED OUR NORMATIVE TEXTS in response to Resolution 13.4 of the XVIII General Assembly. In this task, of course, we have relied on the wisdom of our members, who have had the opportunity to collaborate in this work in the district meetings for the past two years. Among the more significant revisions, we have called Mission Directors to full participation with deliberative voice in the meetings of the Moderator General and General Council with the Provincial and Vicariate Directors (S 36). Missions will also be able to elect delegates to future General Assemblies (A 4). We believe that the revisions to the Normative Texts reflect what we aspire to be and how we wish to live and to minister together.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As we conclude our Assembly, we look to the future with hope. We have elected new leaders at the level of general government for the next six years. We trust in their collective wisdom, skills, and above all in their commitment to the Lord, to the people of God, and to our Congregation. We also trust that all

«The refounding of our Congregation must find its ground in personal spiritual renewal and the spiritual renewal of local communities. We recognize that refounding is not mainly a matter of modifying structures but rather of dreaming new dreams and having new visions (cf. Joel 3, 1).»

«As Missionaries of that Blood, we must keep before us that image of love as self-giving.

We commit ourselves and invite our confreres to making this love in the heart of God concrete in our local communities, in our ministry, among our lay associates, and in our world. This is the path along which our life and our love must move.»

of our members and lay associates will work with them as fellow servants of God's word and God's kingdom.

We propose the following tasks for the new Moderator General and General Council for the years ahead. We group them together under the categories that we have come to call the "three pillars" of our Congregation: mission, community, and spirituality.

We call on our general government to strengthen the pillar of MISSION by:

- a. Developing a Congregation-wide understanding of the theology and spirituality of mission today.
- b. Leading the Congregation into a deeper sense of vocation to the "new evangelization" or re-evangelization that gives primacy to preaching the word in all its forms, to the Eucharist, and to the option for the poor and marginalized.
- c. Calling all members to recognize that the ministry of the word of God must include being a prophetic voice for justice.
- d. Continuing to give attention to such justice issues as human rights, the integrity of creation, and migration.
- e. Addressing issues raised by the exchange of members between Provinces, Vicariates and missions.
- f. Promoting new initiatives in ministry even as we leave older

commitments, recalling the words of Jesus, "Duc in altum!" (Luke 5, 4) and given special emphasis by John Paul II in his address to the XVII General Assembly in 2001 (Cf. also *Novo millennio ineunte*, 1).

- g. Fostering pastoral ministry with the burgeoning youth population.
- h. Giving greater attention to the victims of violence and to eradicating the causes of violence.
- i. Inviting the laity to authentic collaboration in our ministry and to helping the lay faithful to fulfill their role in the ministry of the Church in the spirit of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council.

- j. Fostering discussion of and creative response to the declining numbers of active members in the North.
- k. Working toward reconciliation at all levels within the family, the Congregation, the Church, and all of society.

We call on our general government to strengthen the pillar of COMMUNITY by:

- a. Fostering the dialogue among all units of our Congregation by ensuring a healthy flow of information to promote accurate mutual understanding.
- b. Addressing issues of cross-regional and international formation of a CPPS identity as part of both initial and ongoing formation.
- c. Deepening the renewal of community life, for the sake of our members and as a witness to our mission.
- d. Assuring the ongoing education of our members regarding healthy celibate living and the prevention of destructive behavior such as sexual and substance abuse.
- e. Continuing to support vocation ministry.

OUR AUTHORS

Fr. Francesco Bartoloni is the newly elected Moderator General of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. He has been Vice Moderator General in the years 2001-2007 after being ministering in Tanzania (Africa) for 28 years in different positions.

Fr. Seamus Freeman is the former Superior General of the Society of Lay Apostolate (Pallottines). He was involved in parish work and the Lay Association of his Society before being elected by Pope Benedict XVI Bishop of Ossory in Ireland.

Fr. Barry Fischer is the first Director of the newly established *International Centre of Precious Blood Spirituality* in Salzburg, Austria. He has been Moderator General of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood for the last twelve years, 1995-2007. He is currently taking a Sabbatical.



The candle is passed from fr. Barry to fr. Francesco

- f. Promoting ongoing formation among our members.
- g. Continuing to support and encourage the vocation of brother in the CPPS.
- h. Strengthening relationships with our lay associates.
- i. Encouraging reflection on dealing with an aging membership in some areas.
- j. Building the economic and leadership resources in the South that will enable all units of the South to achieve autonomy as Provinces.

We call on our general government to strengthen the pillar of SPIRITUALITY by:

- a. Working toward the spiritual renewal of the Congregation as a means of re-entering the work of “refounding.”
- b. Continuing the development of Precious Blood spirituality, especially around the theme of caritas.
- c. Helping the laity to develop a

- d. Reinforcing the awareness of the mystical ground of our apostolic life and helping members to live a deeper life of the Spirit.

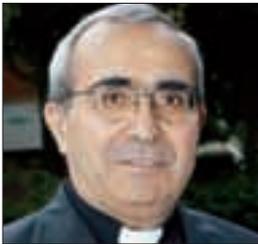
CONCLUSION

In the chapel in which we have celebrated Eucharist together each day of the Assembly, we have had before us the image of Gaspar holding a chalice of the Blood of Christ, Blood which flowed from the pierced side of Jesus. In his encyclical letter *Deus caritas est*, the Holy Father calls us to meditate on this very scene: by contemplating the pierced side of Christ (cf. John 19:37), we can understand the starting-point of this Encyclical Letter: ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8). It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move (no. 12).

As Missionaries of that Blood, we must keep before us that image of love as self-giving. This is love, as our Holy Father says in the same passage, “in its most radical form.” We commit ourselves and invite our confreres to making this love in the heart of God concrete in our local communities, in our ministry, among our lay associates, and in our world. This is the path along which our life and our love must move.

We call upon our newly elected Moderator General and General Councilors to call us to fidelity to this vision of love and to the charism of St. Gaspar, which was a particular way of incarnating and understanding the mystery of God’s love. It is a charism that remains valid and life-giving today.

We commend our new leaders and our Congregation to Mary, Woman of the New Covenant; to St. Gaspar, our Founder; and to St. Francis Xavier, our patron. ♦



FR. FRANCESCO BARTOLONI, CPPS. I was born on October 13, 1948, in Giano dell'Umbria, very near the Abbey of San Felice, the cradle of our Congregation. I knew our Missionaries since I was a boy, and when I decided to enter the seminary it was not difficult to choose one. I completed my studies in philosophy and theology at the Gregorian University. Shortly after my ordination, 30 March 1974. I went to the Mission that the Italian Province had opened in Tanzania. I remained in Tanzania from then on, and carried out my missionary work there. I was a pastor, diocesan director of religious education, superior of the Mission on different occasions, director of formation, rector of the seminary, treasurer and procurator of the Vicariate. In 2001 he was elected Vice Moderator General. I am a member of the Tanzanian Vicariate.



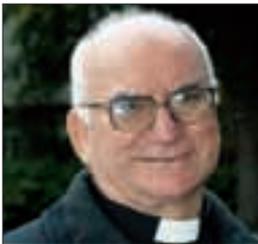
KS. GRZEGORZ RUCHNIEWICZ, CPPS, is a Kashubian and member of the Polish Province; born in 1969; incorporated definitively in 1992; ordained a priest in 1993. He has a Masters degree in theology and specialization (License degree) in theology of apostolate. He had served as a: preacher of popular missions in Poland and abroad (Russia, Belorussia); formator; councilor; Vicariate Director; and has been responsible for the lay associates in the USC. He has taken part in coordination on the national level of activities of Catholic movements in Poland.



FR. FELIX MUSHOBOZI, CPPS, is a member of Tanzania Vicariate – Italian Province. Incorporated on the 17th February 1991 and ordained on the September 29, of the same year. He is an STL and STD in (Moral) from Pontifical University of the Gregorian and Urbaniana in Rome. Past experience in ministry includes parish and vocation ministry, both as in charge of formation and Lecturer at the Salvatorian Institute of Philosophy and Theology. Before his election to the General council in July 2007 he was vicariate secretary. He speaks Swahili, English and Italian.



FR. BILL NORDENBROCK, CPPS, is a member of the Cincinnati Province who celebrated Definitive Incorporation in 1980 and was ordained a priest in 1983. He has a Masters degree in management and has extensive experience in the ministry of administration. He is currently completing his thesis project for a Doctor of Ministry degree at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. The focus of this work is the spirituality and praxis of reconciliation. Fr. Bill was elected as a non-resident councilor and he continues to serve as the Director of Advanced Formation for the joint theologate program of the Kansas City and Cincinnati Provinces. In addition, he works with the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation and is active in a preaching ministry.



FR. LUCAS RODRÍGUEZ FUERTES, CPPS. He was born in Posadilla de la Vega, Province of León, Spain, on March 25, 1940. He entered the Congregation on December 29, 1960 and was ordained priest on July 5, 1964. He transferred to Brazil on January 30, 1965. Activities: Precious Blood Parish, EM Rio de Janeiro, from 1965 to 1977. In Altamira, Pará, Brazil, from 1977 to 1985. From 1986 to 1989 Vice-Rector and treasurer of St. Gaspar Seminary in Belém. From 1989 to 2001 pastor of Our Lady of Buen Remedio. From 1991 to 2003, Director of the CPPS Vicariate, Brazil. From 2001 to 2007, Francisco Albertini Mission House, Ananindeua, Pará, Brazil.

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