



# The Cup of the New Covenant

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD  
No. 16, April 2004

## Living the Charism of St. Gaspar

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

“Gaspar, a man on fire, teach us to love.

Gaspar, a man for yesterday.

Gaspar, a man for today.

Gaspar, always Gaspar!”

This is the refrain from a song in honor of St. Gaspar composed by our Latin American seminarians: “Gaspar, always Gaspar!” This song was chanted with energy and joy by the seminarians and members of our Peruvian mission during my recent visitation. One could almost feel the presence of St. Gaspar among us.

These words capture the intent of this issue of *The Cup*, published just two months before we celebrate, on June 12<sup>th</sup>, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the canonization of our Founder, “the Apostle of the Precious Blood.” During this anniversary year, as followers of St. Gaspar, inspired by the example of his life and his works, we wish to renew ourselves in his spirit, incarnating his charism in the realities in

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The Precious Blood Reconciliation Team in Chicago.

## Reconciliation and Renewal: Expressions of Gasparian Charism in Chicago

by Joseph Nassal, C.P.P.S.

The Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation (PBMR) in Chicago, Illinois, is founded on the belief that the spirituality that shapes our identity as a Society of Apostolic Life and the charism of our founder, Saint Gaspar, are our gifts to the church and to the world. At the heart of the spirituality of the Precious Blood is an understanding of reconciliation. Saint Paul reflected this understanding when he wrote to the Ephesians, “But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near through the Blood of Christ. It is he who is our peace, and who made the two of us one by break-

ing down the barrier of hostility that kept us apart (Ephesians 2, 13-14).”

In addition to a spirituality of reconciliation, the Blood of Christ calls us to renewal, specifically the renewal of the church. St. Gaspar saw this renewal through the ministry of the Word as expressed in the preaching of missions and retreats as central to his charism. Renewal and reconciliation are intimately connected. Again, Saint Paul eloquently expressed this connection when he wrote to the community at Corinth: “If anyone is in Christ, you are a new creation. The old order has

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Father David Kelly on a weekend retreat with young offenders.

passed away; now all is new! All this has been done by God, who has reconciled us to God through Christ and has given us a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5, 17-18).”

As ambassadors of reconciliation in a world ravaged by violence, torn apart by terrorism and wounded by war, and where division and dissent threaten the body of Christ, the Church, Missionaries of the Blood of Christ face a daunting task. But we draw courage from the witness of our founder Gaspar when he confronted the vicious and violent gangs of robbers and thieves that terrorized Sonnino and the surrounding villages and cities.

### DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM GASPAR’S INTUITION

In his book on the life of St. Gaspar, *No Turning Back*, Mario Spinelli writes that Sonnino was “the capital of the brigand republic.” After many failed attempts to confront the terrorism that engulfed this town, “Pius VII resorted to the extreme solution: he decided to raze Sonnino to the ground.”

But Gaspar knew there had to be another way. As Sonnino was “being demolished to the ground under the blows of the pickaxes, along with the

dreams of its people, Gaspar could not keep silent any longer. He took paper and pen and went down again into the trenches.” What Gaspar proposed to the pope was a process of education instead of destruction. “From now on,” Spinelli writes, “in order to uproot brigandage, it should be struck at positively not by trying to obliterate houses and woods, but by eliminating ignorance, underdevelopment, and the ethical and social aberrations of the province.”

The pope accepted Gaspar’s plan of action and a team of Precious Blood Missionaries went to Sonnino and several of the surrounding towns where terrorism ran rampant. Gaspar’s mission was deceptively simple. It was a ministry of presence. The Missionaries moved to the places where violence reigned and established “safe houses.” As Father John Klopke, CPPS, writes in his book, *More Essays in Honor of St. Gaspar*, our founder understood “there has to be some sort of ‘safe ground’ to which a criminal can flee, a safe place other than the spurious security of a brigand band.”

In these safe houses, renewal and reconciliation were rooted in the ministry of the Word.

“For Gaspar, the ministry of the Word and a direct outreach to the needy

were the instruments of religious renewal of his preference,” Father Klopke writes, “instruments which he was most experientially acquainted from the very beginning of his min-

**“...we draw courage from the witness of our founder Gaspar who confronted the vicious and violent gangs of robbers and thieves that terrorized Sonnino and the surrounding villages and cities.”**

istry.” In addition to the ministry of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments that reflected “the witness of a lived faith,” Spinelli adds how the Missionaries’ presence reflected a “solidarity and concrete support to anyone who suffers, who is oppressed, and who is hungry.”

The manner in which Gaspar confronted the reality of violence is also instructive. In his “first contacts with the brigands,” Spinelli writes, Gaspar refused “an armed escort, met with

the whole band and spoke with the bosses about the criminality of brigandage.”

Spinelli reports Gaspar “looked them in the eye” and told them the truth. When he looked at them, he recognized how “the bandits also were the unfortunates, the victims, the hungry who only had chosen a corrupt path...in order to resolve their problems of survival, of liberty and dignity.” Gaspar had compassion for the gangs of Sonnino and the other towns because “behind those sullen looks... there was so much weariness, desperation and marginalization.”

Gaspar and his missionaries gained the trust of the people with whom they lived and worked. These mission houses became centers for reconciliation and renewal.

### **GASPAR'S GRACE IN A SPECIFIC PLACE**

Precious Blood Center on the southwest side of Chicago seeks to follow Gaspar's vision of providing a reconciling presence in a particular neighborhood that has experienced more than its share of violence from street gangs. The Center is located at 48<sup>th</sup> and Damen in a neighborhood known as the Back of the Yards because of its close proximity to the Union Stockyards which operated for close to 100 years before it closed in 1965.

In establishing a safe place in a neighborhood that knows too well the effects of gang violence and racial tension, the mission of the Center is to reach out and respond to people who are experiencing conflict and suffering. As Gaspar established safe houses in territories where gangs of brigands terrorized the residents, so Precious Blood Center seeks to be a visible presence of hospitality and hope as we work with the community for healing and reconciliation.

The method of our mission is similar to the vision of St. Gaspar. We first of

**“Gaspar’s mission was deceptively simple. It was a ministry of presence.”**

all ground ourselves in God's Word, meditating on and praying with the Scriptures of the day. We practice centering prayer as a way of discovering that safe center within ourselves, so that we might offer a safe presence in the neighborhood. In this holy communion of our shared silence, we seek to hold all who are in conflict not only on the streets of the Back of the Yards but also in all the back alleys and front yards of the world where blood shed in violence saturates the soil.

From this stance of shared prayer and breaking the bread and sharing the cup of Eucharist, we actively seek out individuals and groups affected by violence or caught in conflict and work toward reconciliation. In addition to meeting with many groups, schools, and social service agencies already working within the neighborhood and which are addressing various needs, the Center's staff meets with police and other law enforcement agencies. We also convene a meeting once a month with the clergy and religious ministering at the three parishes serving the neighborhood.

The vision of the PBMR is to be a collaborative effort among men and women communities who claim the spirituality of the Blood of Christ. The Center's staff includes Precious Blood Missionaries David Kelly, Dennis Kinderman, Bill Nordenbrock (all of the Cincinnati Province) and Adorer of the Blood of Christ Mary Louise Degenhart who work primarily in the neighborhood. Fathers Kelly and Kinderman work

especially with gang members and with the juvenile detention center in Chicago; Father Nordenbrock lends his expertise to the administration of the Center and also to the Archdiocese of Chicago as part of the mediation and conflict resolution ministry.

Sister Degenhart assists with administration and facilitation of groups while also representing the center at various neighborhood meetings. Precious Blood Missionary Joseph Nassal of the Kansas City Province coordinates the outreach ministries to other Precious Blood congregations, parishes, and apostolates, offering retreats and workshops.

### **RECONCILIATION RITUALS AND RETREATS**

In response to the gang violence that has occurred since moving to the neighborhood, members of the Center have been engaged in listening sessions with the people of the neighborhood and visits with both the families of the victims and those charged with crimes of violence. These listening sessions offer a safe place for victims to tell their stories of suffering and loss and find hope in the solidarity of shared witness.

On October 29, 2003 the Center sponsored a Mass for the Victims of Violence, inviting anyone who has lost loved ones to violence to a special liturgy with auxiliary Bishop Gustavo Garcia presiding. The Mass included a ritual of reconciliation that invited the survivors of violence and families of friends of victims to place pictures or names at the foot of the cross. The ritual reflected how we stand in solidarity at the foot of the cross with the Paschal Victim, Jesus Christ, in whose Blood we are redeemed and reconciled.

Fathers Kelly and Kinderman, in cooperation with Brother Tim Hemm and students at St. Joseph's College in Renesslaer, IN, have offered weekend retreats for teens coming out of detention. The center also is involved in setting up family and victim support groups. In the future, we hope to work with representatives of the criminal justice system and the courts looking for more creative models that rehabilitate rather than

**“We practice centering prayer as a way of discovering that safe center within ourselves, so that we might offer a safe presence in the neighborhood.”**



This prayer cross memorializes victims of violence.

simply punish first-time offenders. We are particularly focusing on the restorative justice model as a means to address recidivism and begin to break the cycle of violence that threatens to spiral out of control in so many places in our world.

For reconciliation to take root in the heart of individuals, first the conflict that caused the separation has to be addressed and resolved. Therefore an essential part of the reconciliation process involves mediation and negotiation. We believe strongly in the skills of conflict resolution. Most of the members of the staff have been trained and certified through a program offered by Northwestern University in Chicago and sponsored by the Archdiocesan Office of Concilia-

tion. Developing such skills also flows from Gaspar's plan of action. According to Father Klopke, "Although Gaspar never says so explicitly, it is evident that he is thinking of sanctuary as a place for negotiation, as a sort of rough-and-ready instrument for assuring equal protection under the law in an age which found that idea somewhat novel." Spinelli adds that Gaspar and his missionaries "agreed to act as mediators between the brigands and the public forces, guaranteeing the surrender of the former providing the latter spared their lives."

Resolving conflicts through mediation assists those who are on opposite sides of an issue to reach some kind of mutual agreement and work

together for the sake of the mission. But as important and necessary as developing skills for conflict resolution are, we also understand that a center that is named for the Blood of Christ and claimed by the charism of Gaspar must be focused on more than strategies for resolving conflict; it must reflect a spirituality of reconciliation. As Precious Blood Father Robert Schreiter has written, "Reconciliation is not a skill to be mastered, rather it is something that is discovered: the power of God's grace welling up in one's life. Reconciliation becomes more of an attitude than an acquired skill; it becomes a stance assumed before a broken world rather than the tools to repair that world."

### OUTREACH MINISTRIES: A WAY OF LIFE

Through the prayer and activities of the center and its outreach ministries, the PBMR explores how, according to Father Schreiter, "Reconciliation becomes a way of life, a vocation, and not just a set of discrete tasks to be performed and completed." Because the Blood of the cross redeems us, we are called to "live in a new kind of way." The outreach ministries of the PBMR seek to facilitate and deepen our understanding of how the ministries engaged in by Precious Blood people – in parishes and prisons, hospitals and hospices, schools and sanctuaries – are safe places and centers of reconciliation.

In our outreach ministries of workshops and retreats we explore some of the key themes of a ministry of reconciliation inspired by the spirituality of the Precious Blood. We examine how those who serve in institutions sponsored or staffed by Missionaries and associates of the community are ministers of reconciliation. We reflect on how our apostolates are safe places where the truth can be spoken, where hospitality is the rule, where the door is open and the stranger is welcomed and the lost can be found. In the spirit of St. Gaspar, for whom the renewal of the church was so central to his charism, the outreach ministries of the PBMR seek to help those who are estranged or alienated from the church to find a place at the table.

One of the outreach opportunities developed by PBMR takes its name from St. Paul's descriptive phrase "ambassadors of reconciliation." It is a weekend retreat designed to establish an ongoing ministry of reconciliation within a parish or other ministerial setting.

The retreat assists a parish or ministry to identify those people engaged in the life of the community who have the particular charism of reconciliation. By definition, a charism is a gift from God. It is this charism that forms the foundation of our identity as ministers and ambassadors of reconciliation.

These are people who are gifted with the ability to stand in the middle of a crisis or a conflict without running away or taking sides or trying to find a "quick fix." These are people who have the ability to hold both sides of an issue with reverence and care and understanding because they know how to listen without jumping to conclusions or making judgments. Listening is one of the primary skills needed for a minister of reconciliation.

Reflecting the Gasparian charism, the retreat is rooted in the ministry of the Word. We break open God's Word as it is reflected in our spirituality of the Blood of Christ and how it gives birth to a ministry of reconciliation. We also explore how conflicts were resolved in the early Christian community and look at practical skills and strategies for resolving conflicts in our communities of faith today. For example, Fr. Bob Schreiter in collaboration with Bernardin Center in Chicago has developed one of these practical strategies called "Healing or Listening Circles" to help a parish resolve conflicts. We look at this and other useful techniques and processes that have proven effective in helping people trapped on opposite sides of an issue to find some common ground.

Through this ministry, we hope to help others discover, embrace, and elaborate their gift of reconciliation that looks not only to the future but names and claims the wounds of the past. Reconciliation is about restoring that right relationship between God and us and me and you. The outreach ministries of PBMR assist those who feel called to this ministry, who are

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willing to stand in the gaps and breaches and chasms that divide, to be the bridges that draw opposing factions together in the blood of Christ.

PBMR also offers a monthly column called *The New Creation* in the newsletters of the congregations comprising the Precious Blood Leadership Conference.

*The New Creation* offers reflections on various aspects of the ministry of reconciliation as it is shaped by the spirituality of the Blood of Christ. The Center also prepares various resource materials for use in community and apostolic settings. For example, the PBMR prepared a pre-Lenten mailing that included a reflection on the Sacrament of Penance as an expression of covenant and how sin breaks the covenantal relationship. Our celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation reflects our desire to live in right relationship with God and with others.

As the vision and mission of the Center continues to evolve, we understand that we are only instruments as Precious Blood Center and the Ministry of Reconciliation seeks to make a stand in the midst of the violence in the world. As Father Schreiter reminds us and the charism of Gaspar confirms, "It is God who initiates and brings about reconciliation...we are invited by God to cooperate with God's reconciling ways."

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

*Il Sangue di Cristo: Mese di Luglio (The Blood of Christ: The Month of July)*. Tullio Veglianti, C.P.P.S. (Roma: Sanguis Editrice, 2003) Scripture readings and selections from the Church Fathers and other authors for each day of July.

*Nel Mistero del Sangue di Cristo: La Vita della Chiesa (In the Mystery of the Blood of Christ: The Life of the Church)*. by Achille Triacca. (Monumenta Studia Instrumenta Liturgica N° 27) (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticano, 2003).

*No Turning Back: The Life of Gaspar del Bufalo*, by Mario Spinelli. English translation of the original Italian, *Senza Voltarsi Indietro*, by John Klopke, C.P.P.S., edited by Raymond Cera, C.P.P.S. and Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S. (Carthage, Ohio: The Messenger Press, 2003).

*Ogni Giorno sulle Orme del Sangue di Cristo (Every Day in the Footsteps of the Blood of Christ)*. ed. Tullio Veglianti, C.P.P.S. (Roma: Sanguis Editrice, 2003.) A book of meditations for each day of the year from the Fathers of the Church, saints and other authors.

*St. Gaspar del Bufalo: Our Daily Companion*, by Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S. (France: Editions du Signe, 2003) A book of quotations from St. Gaspar for each day of the year in three languages.

*Testi Patristici sul Sangue Cristo VIII: Padri Greci del VI-VIII Secolo (Patristic Texts on the Blood of Christ VIII: Greek Fathers of the VI-VIII Centuries)*. Edited by Tullio Veglianti, C.P.P.S. (Rome: Pia Unione Preziosissimo Sangue, 2002).

*The Rome of Saint Gaspar*. Gennaro Cespites, C.P.P.S. English translation of the Italian by Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S. (Roma: 2003).

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

# ST. GASPAR'S CHARISM IN PERU TODAY

by Máximo Mesía, C.P.P.S.

In order to speak of our father Gaspar's charism today one must know his life: what he did, how he lived, and how he responded to the cries of the blood in the specific time and place in which he lived. It is also necessary to see how subsequent generations have embodied his charism in their diverse cultures, languages, times and countries. Since I do not know all the realities in which the C.P.P.S. serves I will speak only of the Peruvian reality and will attempt to describe some aspects of our charism as lived in our concrete situations.

## "MAKING A PATH AS WE WALK"

Our father Gaspar blazed a trail, a path, along which the cries of the blood "clamor, call, groan, and shout" (cf. Gen. 4,10-11), so that future generations of Missionaries of the Precious Blood might follow. Gaspar was marked by the Blood of redemption and became a missionary. He was a man of deep prayer and a visionary prophet. He was a bold, faithful, and transparent man. He was a founder, a person of intrepid faith and missionary zeal, who allowed himself to be guided by God's Spirit.

Today, as Missionaries of the Precious Blood and sons of Gaspar,

with the same sentiments, desires and dreams, we continue to follow the way of our founder and respond to the cries of the blood, in all the places where we are called to be. We are called to be where others do not wish to be and where our missionary project shows no apparent hope of success.

Our charism is to be missionary, to proclaim the merits of the Blood, and to participate in the Reign of God. This is none other than "to announce the good news to the poor; to proclaim a year of grace of the Lord" (cf. Luke 4, 18-19).

We are inspired and guided by the Spirit of God to be in all those places where life is threatened. This is the special characteristic of our charism, and for this reason, it is perhaps easier to remain faithful than it is to be creative. Yet we are called to be creative and faithful. These realities are but the starting point. We are not called to go back in time. Rather, we are called to read the signs of the times in the light of the Scriptures. Creativity is born from a boldness motivated by the love of God and by missionary zeal. We are called to be faithful in the life of the Church and the world, of our time.

We are called to live our charism in the so-called "third world," where men and women are impoverished because their natural resources, flora, fauna, and minerals, etc., have been and continue to be exploited. As a result, the people are reduced to situations of misery. It is here, in these conditions, where we are called to announce the right to a dignified life, to justice, reconciliation, and hope. Our people have been

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deceived so many times by the authorities and by the multinational corporations that their hopes have been dashed, robbed, and pilfered. Mistrust and misery have forced them to live as beggars, even though we have so many human, cultural, and natural resources.

Recently in Perú, after two years of intense work, the "Commission for Truth and Reconciliation" has published its report. This document reveals a chilling, sad, and macabre account of what happened in our country during twenty years (1980-2000) of "internal warfare," or terrorism. The wounds many Peruvians carry have been revealed. Many wish to hear that truth, while others seek to forget. We cannot be reconciled without knowing the truth, just as it happened, even though this truth might be very painful.

It is in this overwhelming context that the Missionaries of the Precious Blood minister. We often ask ourselves: What should we say to the poor who have no work, nor the resources to acquire the basic necessities of food, health, education, and

## OUR AUTHORS

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*Mario Córdova* is a lawyer by profession and the father of three children enrolled in St. Gaspar College in Santiago, Chile. He and his wife are actively engaged as lay associates.

*Domenico D'Alia* is a transitional deacon of the Italian Province. During this year he is involved in ministry to youth in the area of the CPPS parish of Corpo e Sangue di Cristo, Rome.

clothing? How are we to announce Christ to them? What should we do? Sometimes we cannot say anything, but just accompany them, standing in solidarity at their side.

## THE ENDURING CONFLICT

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood have been in Perú for forty years. During that time we have been faithful and daring in announcing the good news, responding to the people with love and with hearts inflamed by the Precious Blood of Christ. In the highlands of the country the land, water and air are contaminated and children are born with their lungs already contaminated with lead. This limits their development. Their precious blood is contaminated with lead.

A committee of human rights was formed in the parish. This committee organized several workshops to promote awareness of the problem and to educate the people in healthcare issues. Likewise, leaders were prepared who could promote the rights of the people and the care of their lands, water, air, and livestock.

This attempt to educate the people and to raise their consciousness of the grave danger of contamination was the cause of many difficult moments of confrontation with the big mineral companies. They think that the Church should remain within the temple confines and should not get involved in social issues. They were the ones who hoped to place the people in opposition to us, saying to them: "The priests wish the mining center to be closed and you will all be without work!"

The people are wise, however, and they never believed them. Today, those who have work live with stress because their livelihood is in danger and they fear that from one moment



The Blood of Christ gives hope to this woman and child of La Oroya.

to the next they could be fired. The law gives the owners that right.

Each day we see families broken up by the pressures caused by this employment situation. Some women have left their husbands and, with their children, migrate to other cities in search of a new and better future. It is a true exodus, a Passover of men and women escaping from the pressures due to unemployment. They migrate from the countryside to the city. And there in the city they have lost everything. In this new reality they have to learn to adjust and to live in a new way.

## THE MIRACLE OF THE EUCHARIST

In this context of death, in the cries and in the shedding of blood of many people, where the guilty have a name and where many are protected by their money, to listen to the Word of God and to practice it is the biggest miracle of all.

The Blood of Jesus celebrated in the Eucharist is a redeeming one. This is

the good news. God is in solidarity with His people! He hands himself over in order to be shared again and again, saying to us: "This is my body which I hand over for you and this is my Blood which I shed for you; eat and drink of it" (cf. Mark 14, 22-25).

This is the miracle of the one who sacrifices himself for his people, because in the Eucharist we share the life of Jesus. It nourishes our life. It is to drink the very life of God and to commit ourselves to his project of love (cf. 1 Corinthians 10, 14-22).

The miracle of the Eucharist is the cry of men and women who seek justice and equality, and who are determined not to contaminate their precious blood with lead.

To celebrate the Eucharist is permanently to decry all that is unjust and to oppose the system that kills. It is the Precious Blood that is shed in order to continue to give life. The poor and the oppressed are the first ones invited to the banquet and the Eucharist is the center of the Missionary's life.

## LISTENING TO AND PRACTICING THE WORD OF GOD

The people gather in Christian Base Communities and biblical reflection groups to read the Word.

**"Sometimes we cannot say anything to the poor: we just accompany them, standing in solidarity at their side."**

**“In this context of death, in the cries and in the shedding of blood of many people... to listen to the Word of God and to practice it is the biggest miracle of all.”**

Through the reading of the Word and through meditation and active contemplation they encounter the saving God. It is God who speaks and the people who respond. In these moments of meditation on the Word, many of our Missionaries have been converted. It is the people themselves who have helped us to be converted to Christ, enabling us to walk on solid ground, where the Missionary is called to serve and not to be served.

This ministry of the Word is essential in the life of the Missionary. I think of Fathers Paul Buehler and Jim Bender, as examples of being men of faith, who know how to drink from the Sacred Scriptures.

They were the Missionaries who taught me to love the missions and to preach with the same zeal as our St. Gaspar. These men teach us to drink of the chalice to the last drop of blood. I hold only gratitude

and love in my heart for all that they teach us. In spite of the years that weigh upon them, they continue to be faithful Missionaries standing under the cross.

What distinguishes us is precisely that we are Missionaries. “Missionaries are not statues, but serve God where He calls them.” We are called to let go of our securities and stability and to have an attitude of availability and of mobility. We are not statues!

**CONCLUSION**

Charism is a way of being and living. It is a way of proclaiming and announcing and a way of sharing and being in solidarity with others.

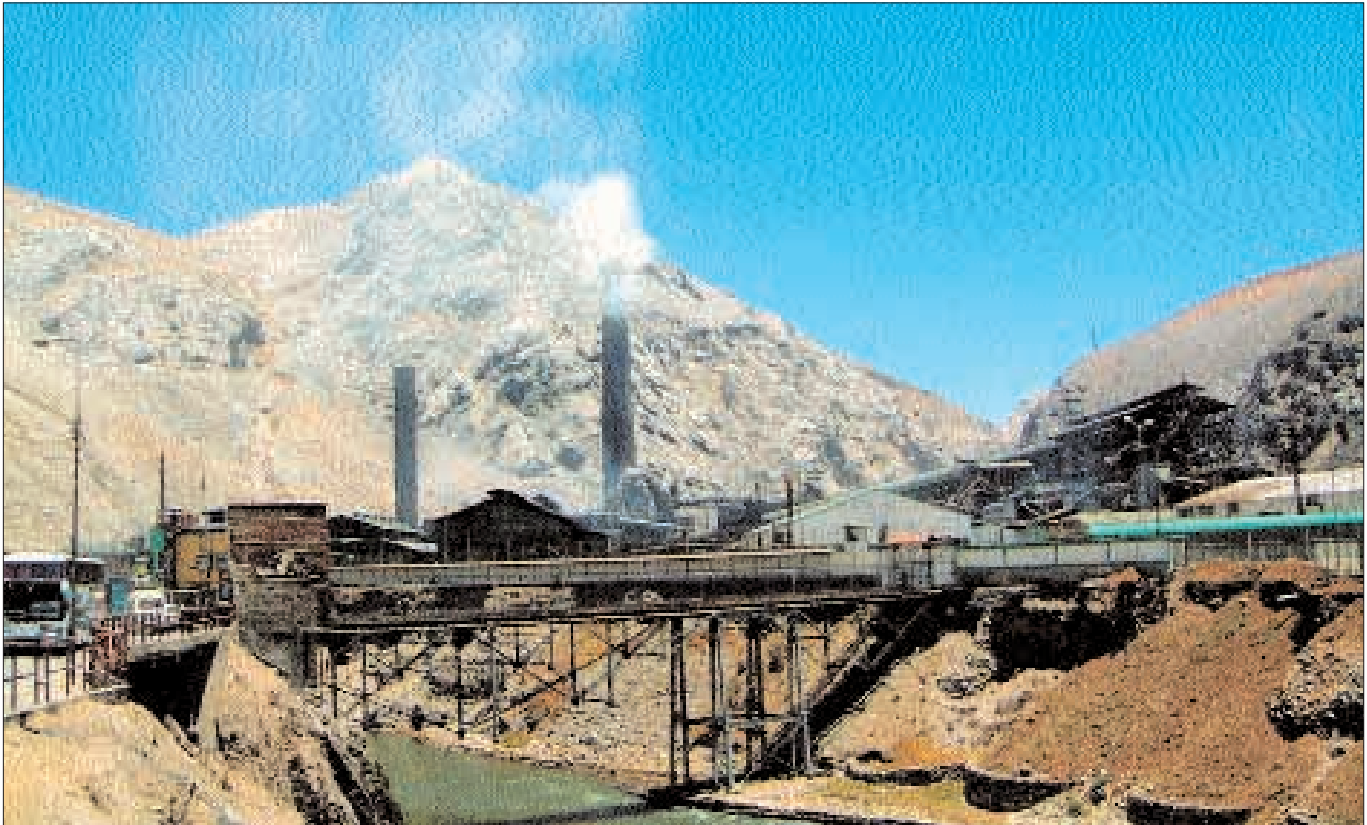
Our charism is being ministers of reconciliation. Charism is a way of confronting the situations we are faced with in life, in our given time and space.

It means responding to the needs of the Church. In a special way, our charism means serving those most in need and those who are despised by society and by the economic and political systems. This is the key to overcoming the death and violence which characterize today’s world. ♦

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**September 13-24, 2004 - Rome**

- Who are we?
- What are we being called to be and to do by the church and the world?
- How can we respond together?



Mining contaminates life in La Oroya.



# "DON GASPAR HAS ROBBED OUR HEARTS"

St. Gaspar College was founded on March 17, 1954 in order to offer families in Santiago, Chile, an alternative education "in the Bond of Charity." From their origins it was clear that the Missionaries of the Precious Blood wished to orientate and to sustain this educational apostolate in the charism and the exemplary life of their founder, St. Gaspar del Bufalo.

They named the work "Saint Gaspar College," anticipating Gaspar's canonization which was proclaimed by the Holy Father, Pius XII, on June 12<sup>th</sup> of that same year.

As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of both these events I would like to share with you, from the perspective of a parent with three students in the school, how the charism of St. Gaspar is lived in this community.

## SIGNS OF GASPAR'S PRESENCE

In 1994 my wife Ana María and I made the important decision of selecting Saint Gaspar College as the place to educate our children. Now, after ten years and with my entire family integrated into this community, I can say that it was a decision well made. From my personal experience I wish to give witness to how St. Gaspar's presence is experienced TODAY among us.

As in the days of St. Gaspar, our society is confronting difficult times of profound change and threats, of multiple needs both material and spiritual. The Church is questioned and faces the permanent challenge of carrying the Gospel to an environment evermore materialistic and individualistic.

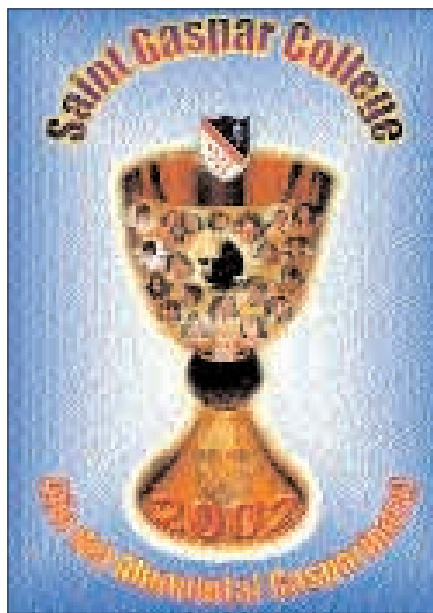
**His presence.** The first thing one notices in this community is the sensitivity and clear awareness of the presence of Gaspar among us,

by Mario Córdova Santander

through the spirituality of the Precious Blood of Christ. His presence is also visible through his image in the park, in patios, classrooms, offices, and many other places, always accompanied by the Madonna of the Chalice.

Professors, students, and their families know that Gaspar did all in the Blood and by the Blood of Christ.

In the classroom, the life and work of St. Gaspar is taught and reflected upon. The children depict their



understanding of him in theatrical productions, drawings, and in diverse art forms, as well as putting it to music in their songs.

There are many sayings of St. Gaspar which have deeply marked our children and which today are still current. The voice of St. Gaspar has not been extinguished and will never be.

**His sense of community.** Another expression of Gaspar's charism alive among us, consists in our belonging to an active, compassionate, and fraternal *community*.

Associations so diverse such as the

Parents Association, the Student Body, Scouts, Missionary Communities, Prayer and Friendship Groups, sports groups, etc., all feel part of a broader community which is the "Gasparian Community," comprised and inspired in the values and in the devotion of St. Gaspar for the Precious Blood.

It is our permanent intention to incarnate the spirit of Gaspar and to make of this community a space of encounter and opinion, dialogue, creative work, healthy diversion and friendship, developing the most diverse expressions of art, culture, science, and sport.

**Spirit of solidarity.** This solidarity reveals itself in the students and in the families of the school through a clear option for the poor and the needy.

Gaspar was characterized as the "Saint of the Poor" and our young people are always ready to help the most needy. There are frequent campaigns to collect food, clothing, toys, construction materials, study aids, etc., for diverse works of charity.

There are many examples of genuine crusades of solidarity that have responded spontaneously when confronted with national disasters such as earthquakes, floods, or more locally, to the victims of fires and other misfortunes. When faced with these situations our young people and their families have organized themselves quickly, in order to go to the help of those in need.

There also exists a clear spirit of solidarity within the school community itself. The Parents Association has maintained now for several years a diverse range of services and scholarships in support of families who suffer the effects of unemployment, health problems, or the death of one

of their members.

**Striving for excellence.** Gaspar wanted to excel and our school also seeks its ongoing development. There is a constant concern for bettering its service to the educational community, to modernize the infrastructure, to perfect its academic curriculum, to achieve academic excellence and to excel in different areas.

**Missionary spirit.** St. Gaspar was a saint of action and he favored in his missionary apostolate those places that were farthest removed and where others did not want to go.

For more than twelve years now, the Missionary Communities of St. Gaspar College have fulfilled faithfully and without interruptions, service activities with the Pehuenches, a native people high in the mountains in the south of Chile, who live in very humble conditions and in great material and spiritual need.

At least twice a year, our young students abandon the comforts of their homes in order to dedicate themselves completely to a variety of services to the Pehuenche families of the village of Icalma. With simplicity and respect they relate to people of other social and cultural positions, so far removed from their own realities.

During the mission there is always prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist. The inhabitants of that far-away place are also invited to participate.

This activity has not only benefited the people of Icalma and the surrounding area, but has also contributed to the formative process of our young people, who experience in each one of their missionary ventures the joy of being useful to society, of filling their hearts with love and solidarity for others, of bonding in ties of friendship and affection



Groups of Prayer and Friendship on pilgrimage.

with their own companions, professors and Missionaries of the Precious Blood who form part of the work teams.

The love of these people for the Missionaries of St. Gaspar is great, and a sincere friendship and strong relationships are generated during the days of mission. Many a tear is shed at the moment of departure. So too was St. Gaspar loved by the peo-

ple of Rome.

Could anyone fail to recognize in this work the presence of the missionary spirit of the great Gaspar and of the inheritance he left us in the bond of charity?

**Spiritual life.** The school has to confront strong and clear pastoral challenges that are imposed by the ambience in which we live: individualism, the manipulation and devaluation of the person, an unbridled and limitless competition, materialism, the destruction of the family, indifference for the things of God, and a fatigue in the spiritual life which has made us lose our capacity to marvel.

In this background, St. Gaspar College raises a new and vigorous proposal: *to wash with the Blood of*

**“The Groups of Prayer and Friendship, through their prayer, support the Missionaries in their vast apostolic endeavors, all of whom are sons of St. Gaspar and continue his work.”**

*Christ a world which deserves to be rescued.*

## **GROUPS OF PRAYER AND FRIENDSHIP**

The pastoral activity of the school is tireless in attending to the needs of the students, professors and parents, bringing the Word of God and the church teachings to the classroom, in special workshops, in catechesis, in the religious formation and in many other activities.

In this context, the Prayer and Friendship Groups (GOA) are to be seen. They are united by the desire to grow in the spirit of prayer and to encourage the bonds of friendship. We strive to cultivate our interior life, to grow in fellowship and in our relationship with God and with our brothers and sisters. There are 33 such groups: 18 of adults and 15 of children and youth, bringing together approximately 250 people in a commitment to daily prayer.

The GOAs, born and organized within the community, are an initiative of the laity (of the parents), accompanied and guided by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. We had the privilege of participating and sharing our experience as GOA in the first MERLAP (Meeting of Representatives of Lay Associate Programs) which took place in Rome from June 26 through July 3, 2001.

This was an extraordinary opportunity to come together and to share experiences with other lay people from different parts of the world, all of whom are related to the distinct works of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Great challenges and solid friendships arose in this gathering, breaking the barriers of languages and cultures!

The GOAs have as their objective that of deepening in their members the spirituality of the Precious Blood, as well as nourishing sincere and strong friendships, founded in God.

Each group is composed of from 8 to 10 persons and meets once a month in the home of one of the participants. During the meeting we reflect on a reading of the Gospel, examine their commitment to prayer and ana-

**“Gaspar was characterized as the “Saint of the Poor” and our young people are always ready to help the most needy.**

lyze themes of interest for the group. At the conclusion of each gathering, the participants share an agape in an atmosphere of friendship.

The groups are assigned a sick person, a cloistered monastery, and a Missionary for whom they pray daily. The Missionaries are members of this Congregation who work around the world. This has permitted us to establish close ties of friendship with people of distinct nationalities, in mutual prayer. The GOAs,

through their prayer, support the Missionaries in their vast apostolic endeavors, all of whom are sons of St. Gaspar and continue his work.

From his infancy St. Gaspar also cultivated prayer and friendship. He always endeavored to spread prayer and to take the Word of God to the most distant places.

That our young people and their parents pray is a gift of God for our school, and that in itself has helped to generate a different atmosphere of renewal and of mutual respect in our community.

History tells us that when Gaspar and his missionaries arrived in the Italian town of Frosinone, they discovered a huge sign hanging in the town square which read: “Don Gaspar has robbed our heart.”

With even greater certainty, I can say TODAY, that if the great Gaspar were to visit our school, he would not only find one, but hundreds of posters proclaiming: **“DON GAS-**



**50th Anniversary  
of the Canonization  
of St. Gaspar del Bufalo**

**1954 - June 12 - 2004**

# THE CRY OF YOUTH

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

In writing this article I wish to speak of how the charism of our Father Gaspar is alive today in pastoral ministry with youth in the Italian Province.

For some time now I have been collaborating in youth ministry. From my contacts with many young people I have discovered that a thousand questions flood their hearts. In our animation team we seek to recognize the traces of that Blood which cries out and which is revealed in each of their cries. It is not an easy task. It is there that we Missionaries of the Precious Blood are called to be present: in their daily lives, in their real needs, in their diverse life experiences.

## DISCERNING GOD'S PLAN

How do we organize our pastoral activity? Within the span of a year we organize several regional gatherings within the Province. We center these gatherings around a common theme which changes each year. We work in close collaboration with our sister community, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ.

The gatherings are always vocational in nature. We help the young person to understand gradually what God's plan of love has in store for him/her. It is a difficult and complex task which demands a measured and patient approach.

In these gatherings we often emphasize, implicitly or explicitly, the spirituality of the Blood of Christ and significant aspects of the life of St. Gaspar and of St. Maria De Mattias. The themes of salvation, redemption, service, communion and incarnation constitute the central axis around which we prepare the catechesis imparted to the young people. It is exciting to be able to respond to their thirst for knowledge!

We realize that what we experience is something beyond our own powers.

Jesus is the One who directs all. We are but instruments in His hands. The knowledge that one is able to act in full communion with the Lord's plan of salvation fills me with joy, renews my motivation, and confirms me in my vocation to love.



These young people in Rome discover the joy of companionship.

Each time we encounter the tired faces of the young, we understand the loss and disorientation which they experience. They have lost their way and now feel themselves lost. They cry out, they shout, each time in a different way. Their cry expresses their need to be recognized and loved, to feel guided and accompanied. In a word: they ask not to be left alone!

## COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

We Missionaries of the Precious Blood endeavor to listen to the young people in any cultural and social context. We make great efforts to develop a good capacity for listening. We strive to listen to them on a personal level and to accompany them in their daily lives, companionshiping them in

their small and big choices.

All this finds concrete expression in various modes, but above all in that dialogue "eye to eye," "heart to heart," "blood to blood." We also accompany them via telephone, e-mail and letters. In sum, we become companions with them on their journey, leading them to prayer and to direct

contact with the sacraments, gradually and knowingly. We are the first ones to pray with them, teaching them to search for Jesus, the Master, the only Rock who can sustain them.

I have come to understand that when reason and emotion are not informed by conscience, young people risk losing themselves in the thousand dependencies which the "pied pipers" propose to them in the plazas of our present-day social culture. In this context it is up to us to open their eyes, with patience and with faith, in order to help them avoid being enchanted by the images and evanescent holograms, both frivolous and inconsistent, which threaten to undermine what we with great effort have constructed together. It is a huge battle, but one worth fighting with indomitable spirit and with all the means that the Spirit suggests.

## ENCOUNTERING JESUS

Jesus Christ, His Person and His Word, are the "red thread" which runs through all our catecheses and is

**"Their cry expresses their need to be recognized and loved, to feel guided and accompanied. In a word: they ask not to be left alone!"**

the arrival point of all of them. Our primary objective is to bring the young person to a personal encounter with Jesus the Savior. All our efforts and energies are motivated by promoting this extraordinary encounter which alone is capable of radically changing the lives of the young. And we also put all this into practice as we listen to their cries expressed in so many different ways.

This spiritual accompaniment, called for by our charism, is something that lasts a lifetime, but reveals itself in different ways according to one's age. We share the richness and the depth of the spirituality of the Blood of Christ in a measured way that varies according to the group of people we are meeting with. We are men of reconciliation, of peace and of forgiveness. We constantly strive to be authentic witnesses of communion and of solidarity.

Perhaps today this is our greatest struggle. In a world fractured and diffident, hostile and greedy, lost and in need of unconditional affection, we strive to be the reflection of a hope that does not disappoint. We raise the banner of the Lamb without fear and shout to young people, to all the young people, that pardon and peace are a real possibility and not merely a utopia. We believe firmly and this is the nucleus of our youth ministry, that in the Blood of Jesus, all this finds its realization and can produce a change such as to inflame millions of hearts with that Fire of Love freely given two thousand years ago by Jesus Christ, who, moved only by love, shed all of His Blood for humanity, past, present,

and future.

### HOW I LIVE GASPAR'S CHARISM

How do I live and incarnate personally the charism of St. Gaspar in my life and in my pastoral ministry? Listening, listening to each one of them, in giving importance and value to each young person. I am there, wherever they are, for them and with

**"When a young boy or girl has experienced a love they do not have to earn, they experience how this love radically changes their existence."**

them. I reflect each day on how I can become a better friend to them. The challenge for me is to give of myself to the point of not having any time for myself.

This is what the youth feel and perceive. I make their cause my own. I make their hardships mine. We struggle together. Whenever necessary I give voice to their suffering, taking up their burdens at all costs. And how would I calculate the cost? I gaze upon the Crucifix and I say to myself: "The measure of Love is to give all!"

This is what Jesus taught me, simply by the very testimony of His Life, without need of great discourses. This is my life. This is what it means for me to be a Missionary of the Most Precious Blood in the midst of youth. I as-

sion and total dedication, our charism penetrates with its fullest potential.

When a young boy or girl has experienced a love they do not have to earn, they experience how this love radically changes their existence. They are left with no other choice than to give away the same gift of salvation to all their friends whom they encounter along the wayside.

All the passion I feel for youth is born of an awesome vocation that the Lord himself has placed in my heart. For this reason, I praise and thank Him, since today more than ever, it is essential to listen to the cry of youth.

### MY PRAYER FOR THE STRUGGLE

I wish to conclude with a wish for all youth who might read this, that you will find strength and comfort in it. I pray that our politicians will succeed in gathering up all the hopes which are aroused in your hearts. Meanwhile, while you wait for them to act, struggle and love there where you are. At times you will merely make a weak shout, at other times you are more vocal, at other times, you fall silent. I hope that you find along the way adults who feel for you and who have eyes in which you can read hope. At that point, your shout of violence, of hatred, of desperation and of hope will be heard. It is our task as adults, as religious, as parents, educators, professors, etc., to help you to confront this great battle: that of loving and of sharing.

If we manage to hear your cries and to help you, you then will be able to confront this great struggle and to be able to respond to all the cries which you will hear in your life. It is the only way to find happiness!

Do not be afraid to enter into this society, often filled with sharks, with wolves and with exploiters. Do not be taken up by their ways, but rather struggle by the side of the weakest ones. Be people of love, without ever lowering your arms. Remember that love is always stronger than hatred. Be light among the others, and you will generate a civilization of love. That light will shine upon you and upon all those whom you succeed in engaging. Then you will be a combatant of Love and of Hope. This is the most beautiful struggle that



Union of the blood of Crist youth conference.

Continued from front page

which we live today. Our celebration is not merely a remembrance of a past event; rather, we celebrate his living presence in and among us. He enkindles the fire within us and sends us on mission to carry the message of the Blood of Christ throughout the world.

### KEEPING THE CHARISM ALIVE

With the approval of the Rule of St. Gaspar in 1841 the Church officially recognized the charism of the Congregation as one of value for the universal Church. Charism is a gift of the Spirit. Every religious institute is the fruit of such a charism. Our founder lived his charism in the historical, ecclesial, and cultural con-

text of the Papal States in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It becomes important for us today to re-read that charism in order to bring it to bear upon the changing social and ecclesial realities of the historical moment in which we live. If we do not do this, we run the risk of transforming the charism into a museum piece. We must know and conserve faithfully the spirit and the objective that the founder originally had, because only so can we have a clear identity.

At the same time the charism cannot be "mummified." It has to be re-read in order for it to go beyond its contingent and historical formulations. Only through this re-reading can we live with fidelity the foundational charism entrusted to us by St. Gaspar and continue to be a relevant presence in the Church and in society.

**"The spiritual sons of St. Gaspar have sought to be faithful to him by incarnating his charism in new and creative ways in response to the ever-changing situations they face."**

The Church document *Mutuae Relationes* describes the dynamic process of a founder's charism as an experience of the Spirit lived by the founder which is transmitted to the disciples, in order to be lived, cared for, deepened and constantly developed in harmony with the Church (#11).

Thus, a charism that was born in a certain historical moment transcends that moment. Its function as a service to the whole Church demands that it remain open before the demands of new situations. This is why charisms must always be open to ongoing development. Without straying from the inspiration of the founder, in each historical period the courage, creativity and the dynamic holiness of the founder must be proposed again as a response to the signs of the times emerging in today's world (cf. *Vita Consecrata*, # 37).

The Congregation founded by St. Gaspar in 1815 in the confines of the Papal States has expanded beyond those confines and is now present in some twenty different nations and cultures worldwide. These historical and cultural contexts are quite different from those that Gaspar and his first Missionaries experienced. The spiritual sons of St. Gaspar have sought to be faithful to him by incarnating his charism in new and creative ways his charism in response to the ever-changing situations they face.



14 Young "missionaries" welcome Fathers Barry Fischer and Francesco Bartoloni to La Oroya.



C.P.P.S. seminarians at Mass in St. Gaspar House of Formation, Lima.

This is the nature of charism and we must not fear this development.

Traditions, structures, works, and our organizational models must be seen in their true dimension, as *means*. When we put things into this perspective then we can operate with creative freedom, as Gaspar did in his own time, in order to discover new channels for incarnating and enculturating the charism.

The holiness of our founder, St. Gaspar, “the Apostle of the Precious Blood,” was recognized by the Church and presented to all as a model of sanctity on our own journey towards holiness.

The charism he gave to the Church is alive in his followers around the world. It speaks with force and clarity to peoples of every culture.

In this issue of *The Cup* we will read about some of the many ways that our Missionaries and lay associates are experiencing Gaspar’s charism in their lives and ministry.

It reflects a mere sample of the many ways our charism has taken on new forms and expressions.

## IN THIS ISSUE

In our lead article, Fr. Joe Nassal of the Kansas City Province describes the recently founded “Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation” (PBMR) in Chicago, Illinois. This inter-provincial and inter-congregational team is a modern-day expression of the charism of our Founder who preached reconciliation and renewal in the troubled times in which he lived. Inspired by the example of St. Gaspar and motivated by the Precious Blood, these ambassadors of reconciliation have chosen to live and work in one of the most difficult and conflictive areas of the bustling city of Chicago.

In the “Back of the Yards” district of the city, they live immersed in an area of predominantly African-American and Hispanic groups that are frequently in tension and conflict with one another. They are called to bring the power of the Blood of Christ to bear in situations of violence, of gang warfare, of teenage deaths, of racial tensions. This team of four C.P.P.S. priests and one Adorer of the Blood of Christ stand as bridge builders between the diverse groups, between victims of violence and the perpetrators of that violence.

They also carry their ministry into the city’s juvenile detention center. They provide a “safe place” for reflection, prayer, and dialogue within which reconciliation becomes possible. Through grounding themselves in prayer and reflection on the Word of God, they first find that safe place within themselves, so that they can become persons of reconciliation for others.

Fr. Máximo Mesía of our Peruvian Mission writes of how the Gasparian charism is being incarnated in the reality of that South American country. He describes particularly the situation encountered in the highlands of Perú in the mining center of La Oroya where the air, land, water, and the people themselves suffer severe contamination. This is one of the cries of the blood that the Missionaries have attempted to address in their commitment to raise the awareness of the people and of community leaders concerning this serious threat to life. To live Gaspar’s charism in that situation is to take a stance for life and to denounce all that might threaten it even when this stance puts the missionary in conflict with the authorities or with the powerful economic interests of the mining companies.

### Cultivating the Interior Life: MYSTICAL HEART AND MISSIONARY ZEAL

A Retreat for C.P.P.S.  
Members in English

Celebrating  
the Fiftieth Anniversary  
of the Canonization  
of Saint Gaspar

San Felice, Giano  
11-17 July 2004

“The interior cultivation  
of the spirit  
lays the foundation  
for the exterior life  
of the ministry.”

ST. GASPAR DEL BUFALO

From Italy, Deacon Domenico D'Alia describes his pastoral activity with young people. He urges his readers to hear the "cry of the youth" who seem lost in a society which entices them with many false gods. As a Missionary of the Precious Blood and faithful to the Founder's charism, Domenico walks with the youth and tries to help them encounter Jesus Christ.

His presence among them, sharing their dreams and disillusionments, speaks of God's unconditional love for each one.

This love in turn calls them to love others as they are loved. He speaks of his ministry as a challenging one but he finds strength and encouragement for mission at the foot of the Cross where he is daily renewed in his vocation.

In his article, Mario Córdova from Santiago, Chile, gives us a detailed description of how he perceives Gaspar's presence in the educational community of St. Gaspar School. Not only is his presence visible through images, statues, and the like throughout the school, but it is particularly palpable in the spirit of solidarity and fellowship which characterizes the ambience of the school and puts a unique stamp on the school's activities. Mario emphasizes how the missionary spirit of St.

**"St. Gaspar continues to inspire people across cultures. The possibilities for incarnating that charism are boundless."**

Gaspar is alive in the missionary program the school has developed with the Pehuenche Indians in Southern Chile.

Lastly, the author describes in detail the network of lay groups which have been formed in the school to promote prayer and friendship and to support the Missionaries in their activities. All these activities as well as the spiritual life of the school has as its driving force and inspiration the spirituality of the Blood of Christ.

## CONCLUSION

This issue of *The Cup* attempts to capture some of the expressions of how St. Gaspar's charism is alive and at work in the ministry of our Missionaries and lay associates today. St. Gaspar continues to inspire people across cultures. The possibilities for incarnating that charism are boundless. The only limit is our own availability and flexibility as we strive to respond to the challenges of today's world. We are called by the Blood and sent by the Blood to proclaim the redeeming, reconciling love of God in ever-changing circumstances and cultural contexts.

It is especially in the Eucharist when we drink from the Communion Cup of the Blood of Christ that we draw strength to commit ourselves to our ongoing commitment to incarnate today St. Gaspar's charism. The love of the Precious Blood was what put fire in Gaspar's belly. It does the same for us today.

"Gaspar, a man for yesterday; Gaspar, a man for today; Gaspar, always Gaspar!" ♦

**Next Issue: OCTOBER, 2004**  
***"Highlights of the General Assembly"***

Printed by Stilgraf Cesena - Italy

## *The Cup of the New Covenant*

A Publication of the C.P.P.S. General Curia  
Viale di Porta Ardeatina, 66 - 00154 Roma  
ITALY

web site: <http://www.mission-preciousblood.org>