Message of the XXI General Assembly
of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood
Częstochowa, Poland
September 20, 2019

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood gathered in Częstochowa, Poland, for the XXI General Assembly. The theme for the Assembly was based on a passage from the Gospel of Luke:

No one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the skins will be ruined. Rather, new wine must be poured into fresh wineskins. And no one who has been drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.' (Lk 5: 37-39)

For three weeks members of the XXI General Assembly and invited lay associates have been discerning the call of the Congregation to become new wine for our Church and world. Our time together began with a reflection on this new wine. Three elements of new wine are important for us. New wine is new, active, and intoxicating. We firmly believe that the Congregation is called to become new wine today. We are called to respond to the Cry of the Blood with a new vitality and passion. Finally, we are called to share this new wine so that the world can experience the joyful intoxication of our Precious Blood Spirituality, a spirituality which declares that God’s love knows no bounds.
We have been guided by our Normative Texts, specifically article 3 of our Constitution, which reads, “The Congregation dedicates itself to the service of the Church through the apostolic and missionary activity of the ministry of the word.” The Word of God has been at the forefront of our experience during the General Assembly. Our process has been intentionally designed so that we have the opportunity to experience the Word of God several times each day. We began each day with an extended Lectio Divina which allowed the Word to penetrate our hearts. We heard the Word of God proclaimed during our celebration of the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, and in words from St. Gaspar. The Word of God was the thread that ran throughout all three weeks of the Assembly and tied our work together.

During the Assembly we were encouraged daily by the words of St. Gaspar del Bufalo who wrote, “The nourishment of God’s word must be provided for all…and from it we expect a revival.” United in the bond of charity, the members of the Assembly and lay associates were nourished by God’s Word and worked arduously for the ongoing renewal of the Congregation.

The work of the first week centered on discovering how God is calling us to become new wine as we explored the present life of the Congregation. Each unit presented a report on its implementation of the directives from the XX General Assembly. This offered the participants an opportunity to recognize how God is continually at work in our international Congregation through our Spirituality, Mission, and Community Life. Beginning with these reports, we began to identify several Core Values in the life of the Congregation.

The entire General Assembly was designed as an extended spiritual process, and this emphasis on prayer was intensified during the second week of the Assembly. We traveled to a retreat center in Zakopane, Poland, to focus our personal and communal discernment on those leaders we needed to ensure that we live out our Core Values. We reflected on our call to become Living Chalices. As Living Chalices, we are anointed, open to receive the new wine, and finally we are poured out in service to the Congregation and Church. It was in this context that elections were held for Moderator General and the General Council.

Upon our return to Częstochowa, we engaged with the newly elected General Council and Moderator General on fine-tuning the Core Values. These Core Values, when embodied in our pastoral planning, will transform our units and inspire us to become new wine. We will drink deeply in faith the new wine of our Spirituality, Community, Life, and Mission for the next six years. Each member of the Assembly and lay associate had the opportunity to reflect on and discuss how these Core Values can be manifested in the life of their respective units.

Our time together, in small groups and in the plenary sessions, was marked by prayerfulness and dedication to the work. Everyone recognized the importance of the General Assembly not only in the election of the Moderator General and General Council, but also for the life of the Congregation. The work done in Częstochowa will help the Congregation live our charism more deeply and fulfill our mission more effectively.
The XXI General Assembly calls on the Congregation to thirst for, drink in, and become new wine for our Church and world. These Core Values are signs of this new wine:


Ongoing conversion leads to a deeper understanding, appreciation, and living out of the gift of our missionary vocation. Through nurturing a deep habit of prayer and lifelong formation in our charism we become authentic agents of renewal.

2. Core Value: Made one in the Bond of Charity, our living together in community and communion is our “First Apostolate.”

Priority is given to the intentional living together of the Missionaries, since this apostolate is a powerful witness to those we serve. Precious Blood spirituality, expressed through healthy community life (Heb 10:19-25) and practiced through vigorous mission, attracts others to join our way of life. As an international and multi-cultural Congregation, the exchange of Missionaries across units strengthens the life and witness of the Congregation.

3. Core Value: The Spirituality of the Blood of Christ impels our mission to the margins of our Church and world.

Responding to the “Cry of the Blood,” we are called to move “outside the gates” (Heb 13:12-13). Through a life of hospitality (Rom 15:7; Lk 14:12-14), we accompany our sisters and brothers seeking healing and reconciliation in a wounded Church and world. Rooted in our charism, this accompaniment transforms our lives, as well as the lives of those whom we serve. As a Society of Apostolic Life, our Precious Blood spirituality and community life urge us to be missionaries who reach out to “those who are far off” (Eph 2:13), who live on the margins of Church and society, especially youth, families and the poor. It is through our presence in the margins, that we will both renew our current apostolates and seek new apostolates that revitalize our Congregation.

4. Core Value: St. Gaspar’s desire for a “thousand tongues” to proclaim the transforming power of the Blood of Christ is lived out through our shared mission with Lay Associates and the Congregations of Sisters united with us in the spirituality of the Blood of Christ.

In order to fully become “New Wine” for our Church and world, we seek increased understanding of and new expressions of our spirituality, community life and mission through deepening relationships among the Precious Blood family.
5. Core Value: We commit to the growth of the Congregation so that the charism entrusted to us by St. Gaspar continues to flourish.

Through the witness of our lives as missionaries and investing the best of our human and financial resources, especially through innovative means of communication, we form relationships that invite others to drink of the “New Wine” of our spirituality, community life and mission. We accompany them as they discern their vocation as priest, brother, or lay associate, which requires us to provide effective formation that inspires and enables those we invite to live out their chosen vocation with passionate commitment.

6. Core Value: Our spirituality, community life and mission are animated by Spirit-led leaders.

In order to ensure that our spirituality, community life and mission are “New Wine” for our Church and world, those called forth from among us as leaders initiate strategies for the discernment of gifts; create opportunities for the development of administrative expertise that addresses the needs of the units; and engage in pastoral planning, in order to read and respond to the “signs of the times,” and to nurture these Core Values promulgated by this XXI General Assembly of the Congregation.

Conclusion

It is important to remember that as Living Chalices, the wine that is poured into us is destined for transformation. Just as the wine poured into the eucharistic chalice truly becomes the Blood of Christ which in turn transforms the world, the new wine which we thirst for, drink in, and become has the power to transform our Congregation. The living out of these six Core Values is an authentic sign of the efficacy of the Precious Blood of Christ. It is the responsibility of the General Curia and individual units to ensure that these Core Values are realized in the Congregation. All the units of the Congregation are urged to reflect on these Core Values and to begin to discern concrete ways in which these values can be manifested in their Spirituality, Community Life, and Mission. The General Curia, in collaboration with the individual units, has a special responsibility to animate the units for these Core Values, to embody them in their pastoral planning, and to implement a self-assessment tool which will be utilized in the early stages of their term to ensure that progress is being made in each unit.