New Wine: God’s Hour of Grace for the Congregation

Emanuele Lupi, C.PPS.

On September 2, 2019, the 21st General Assembly of the Congregation was officially opened. On that same day, the liturgy of the 22nd week of Ordinary Time offered a meditation, a beautiful selection of Luke’s Gospel (4:1-30 – 30), which recounts Jesus’ visit to the synagogue of Nazareth on a Sabbath and the words that Christ addresses to his fellow countrymen who had seen him grow up.

INTRODUCTION

Producing and appreciating fine wine is an art, and often, a costly one at that! Most of us can only gape in amazement at the prices of some vintages on the menu at a favorite restaurant, and we wonder if anyone ever actually orders those bottles, or are they forever collecting dust in the wine cellar?

“The Becoming New Wine” was the theme of the XXI General Assembly of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. As a Congregation devoted to the life giving Blood of Christ, and called to renew our charism and mission in every season, this theme makes perfect sense. While the Evangelists Matthew [9:17] and Mark [2:22] both share a brief parable regarding “new wine,” we rooted ourselves in Luke’s account [5:36-39] because of the added richness his proclamation of the parable brings to the power of this sacramental image, particularly Jesus’ admonition about the inertia that consuming old wine creates.

The Promises and Perils of “Becoming New Wine”

Benjamin Berinti, C.PPS.

Gathered for prayer at the Jasna Góra Shrine of the Black Madonna

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Additionally, the focus of this General Assembly took its inspiration from the Guidelines issued in January 2017 by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, entitled *New Wine in New Wineskins*, a bold and unsettling document intended for the renewal of religious congregation such as ours.

As facilitator and co-president of the XXI General Assembly, I began our gathering with a brief reflection on the meaning of “new wine” in order to help lay the foundation for and steer the discernment that was to take place as the delegates traversed the path of our three-week journey in Poland. In this article, I hope to welcome those who were not with us during those challenging but Spirit-driven days, to imbibe of the new wine we are invited to become for this season in the life of our beloved Congregation.

**THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF “NEW WINE”**

What do we know about the reality of “new wine”? Three characteristics seem most appropriate to explore. First, and most significant, is that new wine is indeed *new*. Second, new wine is still *in process*, is still fermenting. Third, new wine is *inebriating*.

New wine is produced from a *new harvest*, a new investment in the vineyard, and a new hope and expectation that what is being tended and nurtured in this season will offer a different experience than ever before.

New wine is also *still in process*, still unfinished to a certain degree. Fermentation, that is expansion, energy, and movement are still happening once the wine is produced. There is an element of “surprise” in new wine. And herein lies the risk and the warning not to contain it within the brittle and inflexible confines of old wineskins. There is an active, lively maturing process evident with new wine that wants to exceed any limitations one might place upon it.

Third, new wine is *inebriating*. There is a liberating quality to new wine, a spirit that invites new dreams, new visions, and new possibilities. New wine intends to create mind and spirit-altering experiences. Indeed, the announcement and revelation of this season’s new wine is often accompanied by festive celebration and revelry.

Let us explore a few implications to each of these characteristics for the life of our missionary Congregation, as we go about *becoming new wine*.

**“NEW”**

At first glance, it seems obvious that this initial characteristic, the most evident truth about new wine is that it is *new*. Yet we take this for granted, or rather pass over the wine precisely because of this quality. The Greek word used for “new” referring to the wine in the Gospel passages is *neos*, meaning “recently revealed; what was not there before.” As for the “new” of the wineskins, freshness and vitality are further underlined through use of the Greek word *kainos*, meaning, “new in quality (innovative); fresh in development or opportunity; not found exactly like before.”

As a Congregation, we become accustomed to the inferior wines that are poured into our lives, become satisfied with tried and true old vintages, and thereby failing to develop a palate for something new. There are no guarantees with new wine; there is always risk, and so often, we’d rather head to the cellar to retrieve what has been on the shelf a long time, mistakenly hoping that it can provide us with a taste that brings new life here and now.

We read in *New Wine in New Wineskins*: “As we are used to the taste of *old* wine and reassured by proven modalities, we are not really open to any change unless it is substantially irrelevant [n. 9]; Old and new do not go together because each one pertains to its own season [n. 56].”
Some might say we forget the implications of our missionary charism, but perhaps it is more honest to say that we resist the newness that our missionary charism requires. The truth spoken in New Wine in New Wineskins can certainly be applied to us: “Every stabilized system tends to resist change and works to maintain its position [n. 11].” Indeed, as St. Gaspar reminded us, “missionaries are not stationary; we are not statues.” Consequently, it is incumbent upon us that we continue to seek the wine needed for this season in the life of our Congregation.

“IN PROCESS”

New wine is never quite finished, continues to expand. Retrenchment, driven by a heart- and hand-wringing focus on diminishment in the life of the Congregation, betrays the possibilities that imbibing in new wine promises.

Clearly, there are numerous religious congregations throughout the Church who have willingly entered a time of “diminishment,” making peace with the reality that the season of their charism, and the ministry flowing from it, is ending. These congregations have ceased inviting potential candidates, have focused their resources for the care of aging members, and are now graciously thanking God for the life and ministry they and their forbearers have given in service to the Gospel. Indeed, such congregations are also in process, but not the process of becoming new wine. For them, the fermentation of their charism is coming to an end. Perhaps there are those within the Missionaries of the Precious Blood who, given the challenges of our current mission, see this approach as an option for us—if not for the whole Congregation, then choosing it for themselves.

I recall many years ago, as the Cincinnati Province commenced with what would be a 15-year reduction in ministry sites due to decreasing membership and our ability to staff these locations, there was a sentiment circulated by leadership that although we were “cutting back,” we would continue to seek new ministries and new possibilities, that is, remain creative in responding to the cry of the blood. Unfortunately, this remained merely a sentiment, and the promise of well-chosen expansion into new ministries was mothballed.

While we lament a large drop in vocations to the priesthood and brotherhood throughout the Congregation (a constant refrain of the Assembly delegates), perhaps we have become such a brittle and inflexible set of wineskins that we are unworthy or useless vessels that cannot contain the enthusiasm and vitality of new, young candidates who might be seeking religious life.

“INEBRIATING”

Finally, new wine is inebriating, that is, the elixir of new visions, new dreams, and liberating choices for a bold, yet uncharted future. As Jesus warns in Luke’s version of the wine and wineskins, the “satisfied” have no taste for new wine, and will remain entrenched in and defensive of tired ways of living the charism of St. Gaspar. A new season demands drinking new wine, and allowing the freshness to stimulate our imaginations, or in the language of our recent past, to stimulate a reanimation of our Congregational life and mission.

For many, however, the taste for the spirit-altering power of new wine is an acquired taste—and demands courage on the part of a least a few members of the Congregation to create a thirst for this new wine in spite of our fears and current satisfactions, and the encouragement of leadership to allow these to explore uncharted waters without coming up with tired excuses as to why the risks cannot be taken.

LEST WE FORGET... NEW WINESKINS ARE NEEDED

Despite the fact that the XXI General Assembly was an unprecedented three weeks, and the Holy Spirit stretched our communal discernment to new lengths—we did not have time to develop the aspect of “Becoming New Wineskins,” as much as we did “Becoming New Wine.” Clearly, if we want new wine, we must become new wineskins. The interrelationship between the two is critical in the gospel parables of Jesus.

Thankfully, elsewhere in this issue of the Cup of the New Covenant, former Moderator General Bill Nordenbrock will help us reflect in this regard, as he speaks to the absolute need for personal conversion. The vessels we are, both as persons and as a Congregation, need renewal and conversion before new wine can be poured into us. Truth be told, perhaps the shape we are currently in at this moment as a Congregation, both personally and communally, may be completely unsuitable for any kind of new wine. If so, a profound choice lays before us.

Nearing the conclusion of New Wine in New Wineskins, the challenge is set forth: “It is now time for the harvest, and for new wine to be joyfully squeezed from the grapes, and diligently collected into the right wineskins... [n. 56].”

May the Core Values proclaimed by the XXI General Assembly of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, discerned through intense, daily reflection on God’s Word, coupled with inspirational admonitions from our founder St. Gaspar, be for us a wine for this season; a wine that is expanding into yet unexplored corners of our world; and a wine that is so intoxicating that what was said of young and old through the prophet Joel may also be said of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood: “Your sons and daughters will prophesy; the old will dream dreams and the young will see visions [2:28]”. ◆
Transformation and Renewal Begins With Me

William Nordenbrook, C.PPS.

It is the hope of the members of the XXI General Assembly that the fruit of our discernment, as articulated in the Message of the XXI General Assembly, will be the transformation of the Congregation. We say that in the Message: These Core Values, when embodied in our pastoral planning, will transform the units and inspire us to become new wine. And so, we gave this instruction: All the units of the Congregations are urged to reflect on these Core Values and to begin to discern concrete ways (emphasis is mine) in which these values can be manifested in their spirituality, community life and mission.

The hope of the General Assembly was to inspire newness: to inspire transformation and renewal. Anything less will be a disappointment. Thus, while all of the Core Values articulated by the General Assembly are important and need to be embodied in our lives as Missionaries of the Precious Blood, I think that the first Core Value is the most important. The Gospel and Spirituality of the Blood of Christ call us, individually and as a Congregation, to witness a life of conversion and renewal.

What conversion and renewal are needed for us to become new wine for the Church and the world? As I reflect on the Message and try to answer that question, I do so with a perspective formed by my participation in three previous General Assemblies and 12 years of ministry in the General Curia. Much of my work for the past 12 years has been animation for pastoral planning. Through appreciative discernment processes, units have been encouraged to read the signs of the times and to discover how God has been present in the community life and mission of the members. With that acknowledgment of our current faithfulness, units have been encouraged to dream a future in which their “best self” is revealed to the Church and the world. I have been a vocal proponent of the need for units to be intentional and concrete in their planning so that they can be co-creators with God of a viable and vibrant future for the unit.

That same philosophy or orientation provided a foundation for the planning of the last 2 General Assemblies. And at the recent XXI General Assembly, with gratitude and profound hopefulness, we claimed a promise that we can become a new wine. How is that going to happen? Over the past 12 years I have observed repeatedly that there seems to be a sort of “disconnect” between our individual and communal discernment. The members of a unit will work hard together to read the signs of the times and to discern the faithful future of the unit. Often that discernment will include concrete pastoral plans for how they will experience community life and they establish new apostolic priorities for the units. Too often, there is very little follow-through or fruit from that discernment process. Members will support the new vision for the unit or will support the Message of the General Assembly, but somehow members seem to believe that the implementation of those plans or the process of living that vision into reality is not their personal responsibility. Let me offer an example to illustrate this point.

Often in the discernment process in the units, as it was in the work of XX General Assembly in 2013, we recognize that if we hear the cry of the blood, it calls us to concrete apostolic ministry in the margins of the Church and society. So, in the Message of the XX General Assembly, we challenge each of the units to begin a new ministry that responds to the call of the Blood. So, while we all believed that this was the faithful action for the Congregation, in fact, none of the units actually fulfilled the mandate. It is as if we all said: This is a good idea and someone should do it, but not me.

Why is that? How can we discern together a faithful course of action for us, for the community, but not recognize that this means it is the faithful course of action for me?

It is for this reason that I want us to reflect on the first Core Value. Individually and communally we need to give witness with lives of conversion and renewal. Conversion and renewal are a lifelong and con-
The XXI General Assembly has placed this before us as a reminder that our hope of being a new wine for the Church and the world means that we need to be transformed as a Congregation; and that can only happen by the members embracing their personal conversion. The Congregation will be transformed to new wine only if and when individual members become new.

I think that there is a tendency to think of conversion as a turning away from sinfulness and choosing to be somehow more faithful. Members look at their lives and they see (as I do) the faithful and good work to which they have given their lives and think that the only conversion needed is possibly a small fine tuning of their current way of life and apostolate. No real or dramatic transformation is needed, because I am already faithful following my vocation and using the gifts that God has given me for the Church and society. Or to use the scriptural image that guided the XXI General Assembly (Lk 5:37-39), we see the old wine and we think that it is pretty good, and we prefer the old wine over the new and resist any real transformation.

While I think that the first Core Value is fundamental to the process, perhaps it is through reflection on the third Core Value that we can allow the process of conversion to transform us. Here the General Assembly repeats a familiar, disheartened truth and says that our spirituality impels our mission to the margins of our Church and the world.

Only through our presence in the margins will we renew our current apostolates and seek new apostolates that revitalize the Congregation.

For that reason, all of the units have been instructed to incorporate this Core Value into the pastoral plans of the unit. But this communal work will not bear fruit unless each member participates in the communal discernment process by first answering the questions: How am I personally going to be present in the margins? How can I allow my presence in the margins to inspire my conversion and renewal? As I leave my 12 years of service in the General Curia, it is these questions which will be at the heart of my personal discernment during my sabbatical.

I believe that the Congregation is called to be a new wine, not because the old wine has spoiled and gone bad, but because the context for living our spirituality and charism has changed and we need to change our way of life and mission to faithfully live our spirituality and charism today.

This is necessary for the Congregation to have a vibrant and viable future. And I know that the transformation and renewal of the Congregation begins with my own conversion and renewal. 

“Only through our presence in the margins will we renew our current apostolates and seek new apostolates that revitalize the Congregation.”
What does it mean to become new wine and new wineskins? That was the task set before the members of the XXI General Assembly as they gathered in Częstochowa, Poland, on September 1, 2019.

The image of new wine is one which Jesus uses to teach his disciples. Luke 5 records his words: "No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, ‘The old is good.’"

Jesus is telling us that the message of the Gospel is something new: a wine that is active, fermenting, which must be received by the new wineskins of open and generous hearts.

The XXI General Assembly sought to understand the new wine of God’s word in the light of the “signs of the times.” It was also a journey to become vessels ready to receive the message and to pour it out in proclamation and service—new wineskins.

New wine is a challenging image for what a missionary congregation can be. We not only receive the Good News; we also in a sense become the Good News for our Church and our world to the extent that others can see the new wine of God’s merciful love in us.

This is the fourth General Assembly I have attended, this time as an invited guest (recording secretary). This was the first Assembly to be held outside Rome in more than 40 years, and the first ordinary General Assembly to which lay associates were invited to participate as guests.

The Assembly was envisioned as a process to discern the new wine for the CPPS today, and to become new wineskins, vessels that receive the new wine and share it with others. In sum, the Assembly was an extended process of reflection and discernment on those challenging words in Luke 5:37-39.

Part of this process involved surfacing those values and concerns that are of special significance for the Congregation as we discern the “signs of the times” in the light of our charism. In the process the members were guided by Fr. Ben Berinti who designed and facilitated the Assembly as an extended retreat, a time to listen to the word of God in the Scriptures and as found in the life and ministry of our members and lay associates. Each day’s work began with lectio divina, with readings chosen to correspond to the tasks of the day. During the first week, we learned of the realities of our Congregation with reports from the Moderator General and units. Members were invited to affirm how they saw God at work in the lives of our members and communities throughout the world.

That prayerful process was the foundation for discerning a vision for the Congregation for the next six years,
focusing on those core values and critical concerns that emerged in small group and plenary discussions.

The second week took place in a retreat house in the Tatra Mountains. In a more intense retreat process, the members of the Assembly discerned the qualities needed for leadership of the Congregation, in the light of the shared values and concerns already identified. Who would be best suited to animate the Congregation to embrace the core values and to put them into concrete pastoral planning?

To provide a context for the activities of discernment, Fr. Berinti offered three presentations on what it means to be a living chalice, a vessel meant to hold and to share the new wine. Living chalices are anointed for a special purpose, they are open to receiving, and they are ready to be poured out. The image of living chalices really describes what it means to be new wineskins, which is especially important for those who will form the leadership team of the Congregation.

The elections took place in the context of dialogue. Several names for the office of Moderator were surfaced, and those members had an opportunity to say something about themselves and their vision for the future. Assembly members posed questions to them and were encouraged to continue the dialogue outside the formal sessions.

On Thursday, September 12, Fr. Emanuele Lupi was elected to the office of Moderator General.

After receiving the congratulations of the members of the Assembly, he was formally installed in office at the Eucharist which followed the opening of the Assembly. It was to have been ready by the opening of the Assembly but was only delivered the night before. He emphasized his desire to listen and reminded the Assembly to be poured out into the new wineskins, the living chalices of all the members and lay associates of the Congregation. The Message of the XXI General Assembly was approved unanimously by the members of the Assembly on September 19.

At the closing Eucharist on September 20, Fr. Lupi presented a beautiful carved wood sculpture of St. Gaspar, which the Polish Province had commissioned for the Assembly. It was to have been ready by the opening of the Assembly but was only delivered the night before. It will have a place in the chapel as a memorial of the Assembly that took place here. He also presented the Province with the mosaic that had been displayed before the altar throughout the Assembly, the work of Fr. Francesco Caizzone, CPPS, who also designed the official logos of the Assembly.

I look back with a sense of deep gratitude for the opportunity to be part of the XXI General Assembly. The Polish Province, headed by Fr. Wojciech Czerenatowicz, did an outstanding job of organizing the many aspects of the gathering. Fr. Ben Berinti spent many hours planning the process along with Fr. Bill Norddenbrock and the general council and did an effective job in facilitating the Assembly. The presence of the lay associates offered a witness to the importance of their involvement in our spirituality and mission. All of the members of the Assembly worked hard and with prayerful openness to the Spirit and to one another. For them I offer thanks, and I am sure that the other participants share my gratitude.

It is now to be seen how the new wine of this General Assembly will be received by us, the members and lay associates of the CPPS. Will we prefer the old wine, not wishing to taste and become the new wine? Will we be new wineskins, ready to hold and to share new wine with our Church and our world?

May we respond with generous hearts to the challenges of the XXI General Assembly.

“We not only receive the Good News; we also in a sense become the Good News for our Church and our world.”
Message of the XXI General Assembly of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood

Częstochowa, Poland
September 19, 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 reflect ed 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 Gene-
ral 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 broth-

ers 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.
The Cup of the New Covenant

It began the month of September 2019, in the Polish city of Częstochowa. We have gathered for a big meeting. The participants are exchanging friendly greetings, and they do not need to know other languages to understand the sentiments of welcome, good will, and friendship that inspired them. This is the unmistakable mark of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood: an expression of the bond of charity that unites and animates us.

We are enjoying the privilege of participating in the XXI General Assembly of the CPPS.

At our side are two lay persons, like ourselves: Vicky Otto and Francisco Ortiz, who come from the United States of America. Their smiles and warm expressions are just the beginning of a pleasant relationship, which in the course of time became friendship and fraternity in the Blood of Christ.

This was a very special General Assembly: It is the first time in nearly 50 years that a meeting of this kind was held outside Rome, the first time an Assembly would last for three weeks, and the first time in which there was participation by lay people, in our case, a married couple, in an ordinary General Assembly.

The theme of the Assembly was an explicit invitation to “become new wine” (Lk 5:37-39). The participants in the Assembly took up this theme with enthusiasm and commitment through dedicated and creative work with a vision of the future.

The celebration of the Eucharist took place daily: a vital sign of our union with our Lord and with our brothers and sisters, in which the body and blood of Christ are sacramentally renewed.

With the Word of God as a central element of our charism, we practiced lectio divina through daily reflection on a reading from the Bible. We also reflected on a quotation from St. Gaspar. All of this contributed to an Assembly that developed an atmosphere of prayer and personal and group discernment, guided by the Holy Spirit. This created a deep capacity for generous silence, for listening and for appreciating the opinions of others.

The method employed permitted each unit of the Congregation to present its reports, and to learn their fundamental values and critical concerns. The result was that it was very interesting to become more aware of the challenges that face the Congregation, immersed in the cultural, social, political, economic, and religious reality of the diverse countries where the Mission has taken it.

In the beautiful locality of Zakopane, each of us accepted our identities of being “living chalices,” open to receive the new wine. In this context the election of the new Moderator General and General Council took place. They were days of intense prayer, reflection, and invoking the Holy Spirit so that the Spirit would grant the voting members the clarity to choose the best leaders to guide the destiny of the Congregation during the next six years, and who will communicate the urgent need for us to become new wine.

In an atmosphere of great solemnity that was nevertheless one of authentic fraternity and camaraderie, the members chose Fr. Emanuele Lupi, Moderator General, and each of the...
We especially want to thank Fr. Wojciech Czernatowicz, CPPS, Provincial of the Polish Province, and Fr. Ilija Grgić, CPPS, Director of the Croatian Mission, and those who worked with them, who, as hosts for the sites of the Assembly, extended such attention and care to us.

With humility and great joy, we received the invitation of then Moderator General Fr. William Nordenbrock and the General Council of the Congregation to participate in the XXI General Assembly. This was certainly an incredible opportunity for the laity, for which we give heartfelt thanks, and we commit our best efforts to ongoing collaboration in all occasions, activities and challenges the Congregation requires of us, especially with our prayers and friendship.

We have much to be grateful for. Of course, we thank our dear children and those special persons who support us in our responsibilities in Chile, making possible our long absence.

At the end of the Assembly, we returned home with full hearts, thankful, renewed, and happy to have shared during the three weeks with bright, sincere, and prayerful people, who opened their hearts in a shared effort to be “living chalices” and “new wine.”

Praised by the Blood of Christ now and forever!

Two successors of St. Gaspar: Fr. Lupi is installed by Fr. Nordenbrock
Emanuele Lupi, C.PP.S. - Moderator General

I was born in Albano Laziale, near Rome, on February 5, 1974, but spent my early years in Ariccia, where my parents and brother live today. Albano Laziale is one of the important places for the Congregation because the third house of the Congregation was founded here, in March 1821. The property was given by Pope Pius VII. The house of the Congregation in Albano functioned as the general house of the Congregation until 1838.

In September 1985 at age 11, I entered the minor seminary in Albano. After completing my secondary education, I attended the Pontifical Gregorian University to study philosophy and theology. When I completed my studies at the age of 23, I went to Perú for two years while still a student in formation. I returned to Italy in 1999 and studied church history at the Gregorian.

My definitive incorporation was in May 2000 and diaconate ordination followed in October. My priesthood ordination took place on September 8, 2001. In September 2002, I received the license in church history and went to live in England for a year to perfect my English and study the theology of missions at the London Missionary Institute. From 2003-2005 I lived in Tanzania, at Morogoro, where I taught patrology at the Salvatorian Institute of Theology, now Jordan University, and from 2005-2008 I lived in Lima, Perú, where I was chaplain for the school San Francisco de Borja, parochial vicar at San Francisco de Borja parish, and instructor in church history and patrology at the Institute for Theological Studies (ISET) John XXIII.

In 2008 I returned to Rome and was named archivist of the Congregation. In those years I often visited the school of the Vatican Secret Archives, obtaining a certificate in archival studies, paleography and diplomacy. I spent the years 2011-2013 in India, sent there by the General Council as a member of the Commission for the Vicariate.

In July 2013 I was elected Vice Moderator of the Congregation, and on September 12, 2019, I was elected Moderator General.

The important dates of my life are also Marian celebrations:
Incorporation: May 24, Madonna of the Precious Blood
Deacon ordination: October 7, Our Lady of the Rosary
Priesthood ordination: September 8, the Nativity of Mary
Election as Vice Moderator General: July 16, Our Lady of Mount Carmel
Election as Moderator General: September 12, Holy Name of Mary

“For new wine, new wineskins. The newness of the Gospel. What does the Gospel bring us? Joy and newness. To what is new, newness; to new wine, new wineskins. To not have fear of making changes according to the law of the gospel. This why the church asks us, all of us, for a few changes... the Gospel is newness, the Gospel is a feast. And one can fully live the Gospel only in a joyous heart and in a renewed heart.”

(Pope Francis, Morning Meditation, September 5, 2014)
Angelo Anthony, C.PP.S.
Vice Moderator General and First Councilor

I was born on June 30, 1959, the sixth of eight children belonging to Charles and Joyce Anthony. I grew up in Wapakoneta, Ohio USA with an interest in horticulture. After several years of working as a florist, I responded to an invitation to discern a vocation as a member of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. I earned a BA in Philosophy from Saint Joseph College, Rensselaer, Indiana in 1984 and a Master of Divinity degree with a specialization in Liturgy from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois in 1989.

After celebrating Definitive Incorporation as a Missionary of the Precious Blood in 1988 and ordination to the priesthood in 1989, I served as Parochial Vicar at the Church of the Nativity in Lake Mary, Florida and then as Parochial Vicar at St. James the Less Church in Columbus, Ohio. In 1993 I accepted the call to serve as Director of Vocation Ministry for the Cincinnati Province.

During the Provincial Assembly of 1998, I was elected Provincial Director, a position I served in for three terms from 1998-2010. During these years I worked with the members of the Cincinnati Province to restructure our province during a time of diminishment through a process of discernment we called “Next Steps in Faithful Ministry.”

During my years of serving as Provincial Director, I accompanied the members of the Province serving in Latin American as they worked to share the gift of Precious Blood Charism in the various Mission units of the Province.

In serving the larger congregation, I was elected as a delegate to the last six General Assemblies and for two years the Moderator appointed me to serve as a member of a Special Commission to the CPPS in India.

I believe God has blessed me with a discerning heart, an artistic eye and a good listening ear. Building upon the skills I learned as a florist, I am able to multitask and can envision things before they become reality. Currently I am serving as pastor of Emmanuel, St. Joseph and Holy Trinity Parishes in Dayton, Ohio. In being elected to the General Curia, I hope to draw from what I’ve learned over the years to serve the world-wide CPPS congregation as we work to proclaim the reconciling power of the Precious Blood of Christ to those who are hurting; offering hope, healing and peace to those in need.

Augusto Menichelli, C.PP.S. - Second Councilor

I was born 46 years ago in Sonnino, Italy, a little town very well known in the history of our Congregation.

I entered the Seminary of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood Italian Province at the age of 23 and after having served my country in the army. I was incorporated in October 2004 and ordained December 3, 2005. My education includes a Bachelors in Philosophy and Theology at the Gregorian University in Rome and an STL Degree in Theology of Communication at the Lateran University in Rome.

After serving at a parish in Rome, I served as formation director for candidates in initial formation. In April 2011, I moved to Toronto (Canada) to work with the Italians immigrants. There I worked in a parish, and in 2014 I joined the Atlantic Province.

For the next three years I was the Editorial Director (English and Italian) of Radio Maria in Toronto and Montreal. After that I was appointed Director of Formation for the Atlantic Province.

My election in the General Curia arrived unexpectedly, since it was the first time for me to participate in such a gathering, and I didn’t know most of the delegates.

I was elected as Second General Councilor and chosen to be Procurator General.

I must thank all the members of the Atlantic Province for having allowed me to participate as a delegate to the General Assembly. I went to Poland with the certainty that I would have to vote for the new general curia and come back to continue my job in Toronto, but God had something else in store for me.

I accepted this position with a spirit of service and much love for the Congregation, honored that the General Assembly chose me to represent the Congregation in such a position. I hope to be able to fulfill the trust that I had been given, and I humbly ask all the members of the Congregation to keep me in your prayers as I will do with all of you.
The Cup of the New Covenant

Juan Acuña, C.PP.S. - Third Councilor

I was born and raised in Santiago, Chile. My parents are Manuel and Odette, and I am the second oldest of five siblings. I began my relationship with the CPPS at the age of four, when my parents chose the Saint Gaspar College in Santiago for my education. During primary and secondary school, I met several CPPS missionaries and Precious Blood sisters who planted the seed of my future vocation.

I had a long vocation discernment process, and before joining the CPPS community, I studied Industrial Engineering at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. I worked for several years in a construction firm and in finances for the Chilean government.

In 2007 I entered the formation program in the USA to become a CPPS Brother. I graduated from the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago with an MA in Pastoral Studies and I recently completed a Masters in Nonprofit Administration at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana.

I was definitively incorporated as a CPPS member in 2012. Since then I have ministered in the Chicago area at Calumet College of St. Joseph, the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation, and more recently as the New Creation Coordinator helping in the consolidation of the two provinces of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in the US. I have some skills in languages and information technologies. In my free time I enjoy traveling, photography, and guitar playing.

I am very excited for this new challenge in my ministerial life as a General Councilor, and I look forward to contributing to keep Gaspar’s dream alive in my new role.

Alois Schlachter, C.PP.S. - Fourth Councilor

Thirty years ago, I was definitively incorporated in the Congregation of Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Since then I have been active in various areas of apostolate in our German province.

I was proposed for election to our General Council for two reasons: on the one hand, because of my knowledge of languages, and on the other, because of my experience in the field of migration. For almost a year I lived in an international community of Missionaries of the Precious Blood in Madrid. We visited migrants in a detention center there. Later, in our mission house in Maria Baumgärtle, on four occasions we offered asylum to individual men from Syria or Eritrea and lived together with them for some time.

I would like to serve in our CPPS community and help to build bridges between the different countries. Migration and people on the periphery are issues that are close to my heart.

During the General Assembly in Częstochowa, I came to realize that the cooperation between Missionaries and lay associates still needs to be clarified and deepened. Lay associates are a little different in each unit of our worldwide community, and we can certainly learn a lot from each other. Fr. Emanuele told us his “dream,” that the next MERLAP meeting lay associates would be prepared by the lay associates themselves. I share this dream!
The context is liturgical, typical of the liturgy of the synagogue, and it does not differ much from our liturgical assemblies today. After the proclamation of the Word, everyone sits and listens to the homily, and the homily that Christ offers on that occasion represented a moment of grace also for us, gathered in the chapel of the Saint Gaspar House in Częstochowa.

In his brief discourse, he declares the prophecy of Isaiah has been fulfilled, because he himself, with his incarnation and then with his death and resurrection inaugurates, fulfills and perfects the year of grace announced from the prophetic oracle. Jesus is the culmination of the ancient promises, of the Ancient Covenant that “God had established with our Fathers,” and at the same time it is the new day, a day without sunset, which is sealed in the New Agreement, in the New Covenant. It is a Covenant that is not assured by words but that is signed with the red ink of his Blood. The New Covenant signed by Christ is an agreement of blood, where the two parties, God and humanity, meet in the least hidden place possible, because they meet on the mountain, at the foot of the cross, before the nakedness of the Crucified Christ.

That “today the verse of the Prophet Isaiah has been accomplished,” which Jesus announces in the synagogue of Nazareth is full of meaning and at the same time foreshadows the work that God will do in Christ for our benefit. It is a word of hope and at the same time an invitation to allow ourselves to be involved and to allow God’s project to seize hold of us. God’s day, God’s hour, is really the opportunity that God puts before us so that we can act according to his will.

I believe there could not have been a better start for this Assembly, yet the readings had not been changed, everything was taken from the liturgy of the day. The Word speaks to us of God’s hour as the event of grace that is inaugurated and carried out by the Christ event. It runs through the actions that we perform every day. This message was offered to us at the beginning of a very important event in the life of the Congregation, the General Assembly. Article C54 of the Normative Texts reminds us that: The supreme authority in the Congregation is exercised by the Congregation had entrusted to its delegates gathered in the Assembly? What was expected of such an international event? The meeting in Częstochowa had two goals: 1) to formulate guidelines that will animate our Congregation in the next six years; and 2) to elect those who in following these guidelines, will

The theme chosen for this Assembly was that of the “New Wine,” which represents a clear invitation to renew ourselves to be more effective in our ministry. What were the tasks that animate the international family for the next six years. For all this to happen, an open, respectful and free dialogue was needed. Each of the delegates is an important resource for our international CPPS community. We were also aware that there would be no dialogue without listening. That is why during the Assembly there were very intense moments of sharing the Word of God, a kind of extended Lectio Divina, which we lived for.

“"The task entrusted to us is not finished at the end of the Assembly, but it continues in the units in which we live."
three weeks. We compared one another’s ideas in our ideas and used the language that comes from the Word of God.

We clearly kept before us the words of Article 49 of the Normative Texts in which we read that: The ministry of service and leadership in the community is not limited to those who hold administrative offices. Every member is to show a responsible initiative in promoting the welfare of the Congregation. I think we did that well.

We now know that the task entrusted to us is not finished at the end of the Assembly, but it continues in the units in which we live. That is why in this issue of The Cup of the New Covenant we want to share with all of you the Message that the Assembly addresses to the whole Congregation. In addition to the Message there is an introduction, comments, and reflections from some of those who took part in the Assembly.

That is why we asked Father Benjamin (Ben) Berinti, co-president and facilitator of the Assembly, to write an article that introduces the meaning of the “New Wine” that was the focus of our meditation. Father Jerome (Jerry) Stack, Secretary of the Assembly, presents us with a reconstruction not only chronologi
cal but also thematic account of the work of the Assembly, and how, from the first to the third week, we progressed to bear the fruits that the Assembly brings to the Congregation. In his article, Father Bill Nordenbrock offers us some personal reflections at the end of his twelve-year ministry in the service of the Congregation, first as General Councilor and then as Moderator General. He invites us to reflect on the years to come.

The XXI General Assembly will also be remembered for something new that was introduced and we do not know its implications for the future. We had the participation of four guest lay associates who took part in the plenary sessions but also actively participated in the small groups. They were Mario and Ana Maria Córdova, a married couple from Chile, and Vicky Otto and Francisco Ortiz, Companions from the United States. We asked Ana Maria and Mario to share the impressions of their experience of the Assembly.

They are part of the GOA (Grupos de Oración y Amistad) of Chile, a group that brings together parents and former students of St. Gaspar College in Santiago, Chile. They meet regularly to reflect on the Word of God and to deepen the themes of the spirituality of the Blood of Christ. Both participated in many national and international meetings of the Congregation. They have also offered their expert advice in the creation of some basic documents for the creation of the new Latin American Province.

In this issue of the magazine you will also find short biographical profiles of the members of the new General Administration. It is a way to get to know each other a little better, but it is also an invitation for you to pray for us.◆