

## History of the Province of the Pacific

The story of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in the Western United States must begin with the name of Fr. Patrick Hennebery, CPPS. Our mission here began in the autumn of 1865 when Fr. Patrick Hennebery arrived in San Francisco. He preached his first mission in St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco on September 24, 1865, and it was such a success that Archbishop Alemany gave him permission to travel through the mining districts in the hills of California to continue giving these missions.

In 1867 Fr. Hennebery was given the parish in Eureka with all of Humboldt and Del Norte Counties in his parish. The hope was that it would become a center and a Novitiate for the Precious Blood Community. By the summer of 1870 the community consisted of three priests, seven seminarians and three brothers. By 1871 Hennebery had built and opened a school for boarders outside Eureka. In 1872 the attendance here had increased to more than 100 students.

Although the school had been intended to contribute to the support of the new novitiate in Eureka, by 1876 it was heavily in debt. It was a mission near to the heart of Fr. Hennebery and there was nothing he wouldn't do to see it succeed. He traveled through much of the northern counties of California giving missions and conferences in order to raise funds. He gave lectures in San Francisco and Sacramento, and he traveled all over the world giving missions and retreats. For the next five years he gave more than 120 missions in Australia, going from there to New Zealand, and to Tasmania. In 1883 he is in Capetown, South Africa, then to Zanzibar, Mauritius, the East Coast of Africa, and then to Bombay. He gave hundreds of missions in India before departing for Rome.

His beloved college had closed in 1879 for lack of funds, but on his return to California in 1886 he reopened it. Although he continued to give missions and occasional lectures throughout Northern California in order to provide funds, the college closed for good in 1889. Fr. Hennebery died while giving a mission in Virginia City, Nevada, in 1897.<sup>1</sup>

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood returned to the west in 1953 in the person of Fr. Thomas Clayton, CPPS, otherwise known as *Clayton from Dayton*. At the time Clayton was the development director for the American Province who was sent out west to seek opportunities for ministry for our members. A Mission House was opened in Woodside, CA in the summer of 1953 primarily as a center for the Mission Band on the west coast. The Mission Band worked all over California, often in Southern California. The Mission house served as a place of rest for the missionaries as well as a house for hospitality and formation sessions for members and for diocesan clergy.

In 1955 the Missionaries were given two parishes, St. Barnabas Parish in Alameda, and St. Anthony in Manteca, California. Our ministry began in these two parishes on July 1<sup>st</sup>, the Solemnity of the Precious Blood. The Archbishop had wanted schools established in the parish in Alameda for many years. Fr. Guillozet was the first pastor of St. Barnabas parish. Within a year he retired for health reasons and Fr. Aloys Selhost became pastor.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Hallowed Were the Gold Dust Trails*, Henry J. Walsh, SJ, University of Santa Clara Press, p. 294-295

Under Fr. Selhorst's leadership the land was acquired and the school was built. The School opened September 3, 1958. Alameda always had two priests serving the parish in the early days.

In Manteca the Missionaries also built and opened a parish school in the early years. There were always two men serving the parish and there were two and sometimes three missionaries living there who were serving the California Youth Authority. Bro. Joe Brown lived there when he taught at two local Catholic High Schools and was principal of the parish grade school.

In 1964 the Missionaries opened a house in Santa Rosa, under Bishop Maher of Santa Rosa who gave the Precious Blood Community a high school to staff, Cardinal Newman High School. The Faculty house was built for 21 members so that missionaries could live there as well as faculty. Richard Grever was the first principal and the superior of the house. Fr. Steffes was the vice-superior. Fr. Kuzy and Fr. Hinders were part of the first group. Part of the agreement with the Santa Rosa Diocese was that eventually we would have 12 priests teaching at the High School. The highest number reached was 6 priests and three Brothers.<sup>2</sup>

### **Division of the American Province, April 20, 1965**

One day a telegram arrived announcing the division of the American Province into three provinces. The telegram told what States would be in each province. California, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Hawaii were listed as the states in the Province of the Pacific. Soon after another telegram arrived and subtracted New Mexico from the list. Apparently Fr. Carl Nieset, the only CPPS in New Mexico wanted to be part of the Kansas City Province.

Fr. Linenburger, the Moderator General, went to each province for their elections. There he read the decree from the Congregation of Religious establishing the Province and he presided over the elections. The elections were held in the chapel at the Cardinal Newman faculty house on April 22, 1965. The elections were held according to the American Customary at the time, for a period of six years. Cletus Foltz was elected the first provincial. Richard Grever, Seraphin Oberhauser, Joseph Otte, and Anthony Gamble were elected councilors. Fr. Oberhauser had once served as Provincial of the American Province.

At the beginning the province numbered 23 priests and 1 brother. The houses and parishes include a mission house in Woodside, CA, St. Barnabas Parish in Alameda, CA, St. Anthony Parish in Manteca, CA, Cardinal Newman High School in Santa Rosa, CA, Sonoma State Hospital and Los Guilucos School, a correctional facility, Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital, Ursuline High School at Santa Rosa, and Modesto State Hospital. The next few years saw us taking on Sierra Conservation Center at Jamestown, CA, O.H. Close School for Boys at Stockton, CA, Retreat House of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph at Palos Verdes, CA, Newman Center of San Francisco City College, St. Agnes

---

<sup>2</sup> Interview, Marvin Steffes, CPPS

Parish in Los Angeles, Karl Holton School for Boys in Stockton, CA, and St. Francis Parish in East Palo Alto. The center house at Woodside was the only real estate the CPPS owned in California.

### **65-75 Birth of province**

The early days of the province saw an increase of members to 33 and expansion of the ministry and parishes staffed by the Precious Blood Missionaries. The new Provincial Statutes were created and established four year terms of office for the Provincial and his council. Fr. Steffes remembers that in the early days the statutes were created to limit the authority of the provincial. Although he retained dominative authority, many decisions required the consent of the council or the members.

One of the more significant events of these early years was the Fire of 1967. The Rectory at St. Anthony Parish in Manteca was a large rectory housing several missionaries at Manteca. In the early hours of the morning the Rectory was engulfed in flames. In the process of warning the others the Pastor, Fr. Aloys Selhorst, was overcome with smoke and lost his life in the fire.

The sale of the Mission House at Woodside was another momentous event. Coupled with the diminishment of the mission band, there was a desire to live more simply and to identify with the poor. The community soon took on ministry in the parishes of St. Francis in East Palo Alto and in St. Agnes Parish in Los Angeles. Both of these parishes ministered to poorer, inner city communities.

Bernard Schmidt was the first Pastor of St. Agnes, but it was in the pastorate of CJ Farabaugh and the ministry of Thomas Sweeterman that the ministry to the larger immigrant population grew. It was a large parish of over 5000 families. It was at the time a predominantly African American parish. Later Central American immigrants came to dominate.

### **Fr. CJ Farabaugh**

The ministry of Fr. CJ Farabaugh was indicative of the kind of focus the Pacific Province has had for its' nearly 40 years. It was at St. Agnes that Fr. CJ made his mark. He had worked on vocations for a number of years. He is responsible for recruiting several members of our province. He once taught at Brunnerdale High School in the American Province, but he never really desired to be a teacher. Then he worked in a parish, then with the kids at juvenile hall in Stockton. When we took over St. Agnes he was assigned as Associate Pastor. Soon his fun loving nature and his commitment to the poor found him in a serious conflict with the Pastor. The situation became serious enough that the provincial, Don Vogl had to step in. In a short while CJ became pastor of St. Agnes and he served there for over 20 years. He was part of the founding of South Central Organizing Committee (SCOC). He founded the St. Agnes dining room. He was deeply involved with Civil Rights, rights for the poor, getting people to vote, and helping the neighborhood get organized around social justice issues. SCOC succeed in remarkable ways. Nearly 100 churches were part of it. At first St Agnes was predominately African

American. Then Thomas Sweeterman came and started a Spanish mass, and then it became more and more a Hispanic community. CJ got more and more into social justice issues. SCOC really gave CJ life and he gave his life to it.

SCOC gave a voice to the poor. Its members were accomplished at gathering large groups of people and getting behind certain causes: minimum wage, standards in school, closing of liquor stores, gang violence, and any issue that focused on human dignity and the needs of the neighborhood. One of the major issues was the opening of a supermarket for the area. Major vendors had abandoned the area and SCOC had entered on a campaign to provide appropriate services. It took about 15 years. It never did come while CJ was still alive. SCOC had the ability to gather enough people together and to draw in the press. The impact would be significant to the point that they could go to the Mayor's office, and the mayor would come out to talk with them.

People really loved him. They would tell stories of his walking through the school yard with pockets full of candy. He did not speak Spanish. He was always so friendly that people just thought he spoke Spanish. He spent a lot of time with them and they revered him almost like a grandfatherly figure. When he died in May of 1990, it was one of the biggest funerals of South Central. It was not in the arrangements, but the gathering of the people for his funeral closed the busy streets surrounding the church.<sup>3</sup>

## **Second Decade 1975-1985**

A review of the history of the Pacific Province finds a definite mobility; the community is always on the move responding to the needs of the situation in the church and in the community. The first provincial council had resigned before the completion of their six year term of office. In 1970 a new Provincial and council was elected for a four year term. In Fr. Donald Vogl's term of office the main concerns dealt with the changes in the church, the death and departure of many members, the needs of formation and the individual desires of various members. Fr. Marvin Steffes, CPPS was elected provincial in 1974. He remembers the time as a period of transition and sometimes painful departures. Some members were never happy with the formation picture and as the formation program moved from the Diocesan seminary to the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, there were still members who vehemently opposed it.

During this period the Province gave up administration of the High School in Santa Rosa. There had been a time when everything was centered in the Santa Rosa Diocese and most of the members worked in that Diocese. Now only Fr. Cletus Kern was left in the Diocese. He stayed until the Provincial offices were moved into St. Paul's former convent in San Pablo, CA.

In 1978 Richard Grever was elected Provincial. The Community took on the administration of St. Edward Parish in Newark, California with Marvin Steffes being appointed pastor. The 70's saw the ministry of Fr. John Bosch at the Apostleship of Prayer at the Port of Oakland. In many ways this ministry to itinerants epitomized the

---

<sup>3</sup> Interview of Fr. James Franck, CPPS

desire of the community to serve those most in need. Fr. Kuzy and Fr. Volmer ministered in the southern part of the state of Utah, a state with a significant population of Mormons. There were very few Catholics when Fr. Kuzy began in Utah. The parish church of St. George was a little old dumpy church with a rectory attached. Fr. Kuzy was thought to be crazy for thinking he could build a new Church. It was, after all, Mormon territory. He kept doing things. He ran a thrift store and he attracted all these people. He got the property, built the church. Then he built a hall. By the time of his death he had to expand the church because of the large increase.<sup>4</sup> Fr. Kuzy spent part of each weekend in his car as he celebrated Mass in three states (Arizona, Utah, and Nevada) and two dioceses each weekend.<sup>5</sup>

### **Third Decade 1985-1995**

Paul Link was elected Provincial in 1982, the first provincial of the Province of the Pacific to serve two terms. The early 80's saw an increase in focus and understanding of a spirituality of the Precious Blood, but it also saw some significant struggles, most notably in financial concerns.

At the division of the American province in 1965, the Province of the Pacific inherited from the American province a debt that matched the total value of its real estate, the mission house in Woodside. No other province had a debt that was even close to the value of its real estate. This debt plagued the little province until the Woodside house was sold. Finally the province began to operate without debt, but it was “hand to mouth” operations for many years because salaries were very low (only one hundred dollars per month for the teachers at Cardinal Newman High School) and Formation costs and living expenses were high. As the province began to develop some investments, it also began looking for a house in Berkeley for the Formation Program and part time Provincial office. A serious error for the Community on the part of a stock firm who falsely stated our portfolio as larger than reality by a factor of ten put the province in serious financial difficulties as soon as we purchased the Berkeley house. The moderator general requested that the other provinces assist us to get us back on a safe course. A few years later the province on its own asked for some help in buying the Province Center House in San Leandro. Some helped us, and we have not had serious cash flow problems since.<sup>6</sup>

At one time the Community was ministering, with a few exceptions, almost entirely in the Diocese of Santa Rosa. Later, again with only a few exceptions most of the members ministered in the Diocese of Stockton. With the retirement of many of those working as prison chaplains in the diocese, and with our departure from St. Anthony parish, we had departed completely from the Diocese by 1993. We had members in Monterey, Los Angeles and Mexico but everyone else was centered in the Northern California diocese of Oakland.

In our short history our members have worked all over the west. Joe Green and Joe Otte had worked in Phoenix with the “Sunset Community.” Paul Link spent a time

---

<sup>4</sup> Interview of James Franck, CPPS

<sup>5</sup> Provincial Newsletter

<sup>6</sup> Interviews with Joe Brown, CPPS

ministering to a very small parish in Bagdad, Arizona. The early 90's saw three members working in the Diocese of Monterey, Joe Brown, Ron Wiecek and Marvin Steffes. Marvin worked there until 2003, and the Diocese has given us an open-ended invitation to return. For a time the west also included Indiana when both Javier Soto and Joe Brown worked there.

In 1981 the Community had begun its turn toward a greater focus on a Spirituality of the Precious Blood with an Emmaus retreat at the Christian Brother retreat house in Napa. . The acquiring of a distinctive stole for each community member served to increase the sense of identity as Precious Blood Missionaries and served as the first identifying mark of membership in the Province.<sup>7</sup> Many members speak of a retreat held in 1987 with Robert Schreiter where the seeds of this greater focus definitely took root. In 1988 the community adopted its new mission statement. The publication of the CPPS resource series contributed a great deal to this recovery of the uniqueness and distinctiveness of our charism. John Klopke, who had served several years on the General Council, contributed to the series with two volumes of essays in honor of St. Gaspar, explaining Gaspar's ideas of reform, of community and of mission. Many of these CPPS resources were a great assistance in formation work, both with members and companions.

Fr. James Franck was elected Provincial in 1990. In 1991 the assembly adopted a Statement of Faith professing among other things "a love for tradition, and an eye-for-the-edge, a devotion to duty, and fidelity to our community" We discovered in our smallness and in our mission an ability to plumb the depths while we reach for new heights. In 1993 the mission statement was shortened and revised and translated into Spanish. It remains the mission statement at the present time.

In 1994 the community adopted a "Corporate Stance." In this corporate stance the members pledged to serve the needs of immigrants and to focus on strengthening and serving families. This proved to be timely as the California electorate was preparing to establish laws detrimental to an increasingly immigrant population, denying them education and health care. In September, 1994 through preaching and public action the Missionaries of the Precious blood took a significant stance against Proposition 184 on the November ballot. In Alameda, St. Barnabas parish organized all the churches in the city in a march on City Hall, convincing them to at least take a neutral stance on the proposition.

The late 80's and early '90's saw an increased inclusion of other cultures and languages into our community. In 1985 Rene Cerecedo, a native of Mexico, was ordained for the community. He began working in Manteca and then in Newark, but soon moved to a poor area outside Mexico City. He became pastor of the parish of Sagrado Corazon in Iztapalapa in 1997. With the increase and success of his ministry in Mexico, and with several young men inquiring into the congregation from Mexico, the province struggled with the question of beginning a mission in Mexico. Men coming north to be educated soon left us. We did not have the resources to establish our own formation program with only one member. Collaboration with other provinces and vicariates began and by 2002

---

<sup>7</sup> Interview, Gary Luiz, CPPS

two young men from our parish in Mexico were incorporated into the Chilean Vicariate.

The early 90's saw other efforts to respond to the signs of the times. In a short time email became a regular feature of communication among members with one another and the world. In 1989 an electronic mail list, the Gaspar List, was established to spread Precious Blood Spirituality and soon had correspondents in Singapore, Australia, Argentina, and India as well as the United States. 1990 saw the first Precious Blood website on the Catholic Information Network. Most provinces had followed suit by the end of the decade. July 2002 saw the mail list develop into a Web Log, more commonly known in computer language as a "Blog." It received 15,000 visits in its first six months of operation.

The Companion program began in the province in 1991. By the next year the province had more than 50 companions, lay associates in covenant with the community. Companions Maureen Lahiff, Gerry Downs and Peggy Doherty participated in the preaching of missions and retreats, and by the end of the decade there were Companions serving in internal ministries of the community, both on vocation and formation teams. In 1995 a group of members and companions composed and piloted a new Precious Blood Mission. This mission, revised in recent years, is still being given in collaboration with Precious Blood members, Companions and Adorers of the Blood of Christ. Jeffrey Keyes and Companions David and Maria Elena Byron have worked side by side in Retrouvaille, a ministry for troubled marriages, since 1991.

#### **Fourth Decade, 1995- 2005**

The current situation of the province is an experience of age and diminishment, along with a deeper sense of belonging and mission evident still in the members. The Cluster meetings in the North held since 1997 have strengthened the bonds of charity and community among the members. The death and sometimes departure of members inflict moments of struggle and pain on the province, yet the sense of mission and ministry endure.

Jim Franck, as provincial, was instrumental in initiating conversations on collaboration with the other North American Province. When James Sloan was elected provincial in 1998 the electoral assembly our province went on record as inviting the provincials and provincial councils of each North American province to meet, a first time event in the history of the CPPS in North America. Sloan met with the other Provincials. It was at a PBLC meeting in Wichita. he asked them on behalf of our province if they would agree to a meeting. They agreed and this resulted in our meeting at Ruma in May, 2000. The meeting was so successful that those in attendance stated that they wished to meet again and to broaden the number of those attending. The second meeting was held in 2001, but some of the difficulties in collaboration were more visible. The Province of the Pacific once again decided in assembly to invite the other provinces to give it another try and this time we offered to host it. This initiative was taken over by the Major Superiors decision to hold regional assemblies in 2003.

It was also in during Jim Sloans' time as provincial that the province made the effort to

increase the quality of its publications and distribute it to a wider audience. "Cup and Cross" the new province newsletter replaced the old Pacific Press and was edited by Jerry Stack.

Jim Sloan resigned for health reasons in December of 2000 and a special assembly was held in February 2001 to elect Ron Wiecek to complete his term. Ron Wiecek was elected to a full term of office in May 2002.

In September of 2001 the Province formation program joined the Collaborative Formation program in Chicago at the Catholic Theological Union (CTU). This is for the province another step in increased collaboration with other provinces and congregations devoted to the Precious Blood for the sake of mission. Bill Delaney, Jerry Stack and Jeffrey Keyes have been active on the Precious Blood Task Force and then the Precious Blood Leadership Conference's (PBLC) Human Rights Initiative (HRI). The first HRI conference was held on the west coast in March 2003.

Currently members are involved on the General Council and other internal ministries, Formation work, and Parish work. They are involved in teaching ministry and as college chaplains. Tribunal work with the local Diocese, Spiritual Direction, retreats and missions are also part of our work. We are engaged in anything that focuses on the ministry of the word and works of reconciliation. *We stand with all who have been "brought near by the Blood of Christ." We stand also with those who remain afar that we might be a prophetic voice and a healing presence to the church and the world.*<sup>8</sup>

### **Province of the Pacific Ends Forty Year History**

The year 2004 provided the straws that finally broke the camels back. With the death of two members, physical incapacitation of another, and three members losing their faculties for past sexual abuse, it became apparent that the situation of the Pacific Province had arrived at the point where its future as a province was no longer viable. Declining membership led to a situation in which the resources, both human and financial, were no longer sufficient to support the ministries of the province adequately. In November, just a few months shy of our being there fifty years, we were forced to withdraw from St. Barnabas parish in Alameda.

The situation was presented in all its stark reality at a meeting of the provincial directors and councilors of the four North American Provinces held in Chicago in November. The Moderator General Fr. Barry Fisher was present and also met with the Provincial Council. The best response given the situation appeared to be that members of the Province of the Pacific request transfers to other provinces of the Congregation. The other three North American provincials and their councils extended an invitation to the members of the Pacific Province to enter into dialogue and to join the province to which a member believes he is called.

---

<sup>8</sup> from Mission Statement

A final assembly of the province took place on April 20, 2005, to mark the fortieth anniversary of the Foundation of the Province. During the meeting the Assembly took the vote to dissolve the Civil Corporation and to suppress the Province. We celebrated a Closing Mass with a liturgy of blessing and sending forth. After communion each member indicated the Province to which he was moving and the rest of the Assembly pronounced a blessing on the member through the laying on of hands. The day was a celebration of the past and a toasting of the future. At the closing prayer the members took turns reading short selections from the letters of St. Gaspar after which the assembly responded with the following quote from our founder: "We shall go wherever God wishes and if God so wishes. I am hopeful." We then sang "Glory be to Jesus: in English and Spanish. A public celebration was held on April 24 at St. Edward Parish in Newark.

At the end members of the Pacific Province were involved in ministry in two parishes in Los Angeles, in a parish in Mexico City, and in a parish in the San Francisco Bay area. Seven members are retired, either for age or health reason and one member is a General Councilor in Rome.

The closing days of the Province offered many opportunities to reflect upon the past and to look toward the future. On May 22, 2005 Bishop Vigneron of the Oakland Diocese celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Barnabas parish in Alameda, celebrating our nearly Fifty years of ministry there. St. Barnabas had been one of the first parishes for the Precious Blood Community in West. On June 11, 2005 Steve Dos Santos was ordained a Deacon at his home parish of St. Barnabas. He began his ordained ministry at St. Agnes in Los Angeles and plans were already made for his ordination to the priesthood in May of 2006. He would be the last member ordained for the Pacific Province. The oldest member at the time of the dissolution of the province was Fr. Anthony Gamble, 91 years old and ordained a priest 63 years.

The province ceased to exist canonically on July 1, 2005.