

Seven Essentials of a Precious Blood Parish

*Presentation at International Symposium on Precious Blood Spirituality and Parish Life
University of Dayton, July 2002*

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Introduction

Good Morning (repeated in four or five languages). St. Barnabas parish is one of four parishes in Alameda County, in the Diocese of Oakland. Alameda is an island in San Francisco Bay, adjacent to Oakland. The parish has about 900 families, originally founded by Italian and Irish immigrants; it is now a mixture of those remnants along with Filipino, Chinese, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Polish, Japanese, French, Austrian, Iraqi, and other. At last count there were 28 languages. I was appointed pastor in 1994 and served until August of 2001. In those seven years I learned how to say “good morning” and “thank you” in many of those languages.

I am grateful for the honor of being able to present these Precious Blood principles, and these stories of how they came alive for me in this parish. It is a challenge to speak in the presence of elders who have more experience and more stories, but it is you who challenged me when I became a pastor, to remain a Precious Blood missionary in the midst of parish life. On my appointment one said to me, “What does this have to do with St. Gaspar?” I spent the next seven years answering that question and in a short time developed these seven essentials as my own response to the call of the blood. In each of these essentials we shall look through the lens of Gaspar’s life and mission and contemporary biblical scholarship. It was one such scholar who mentioned to me that our spirituality was kind of a “naïve appropriation” of one particular aspect of the paschal mystery which we were called to grasp and live with all our might.

1. Collaborative or Corporate

My first essential was the call to be collaborative or corporate in our work and in our witness. St. Gaspar would never have used the words “collaborate” or “corporate” to describe his work, and yet today he most certainly would have used these words if he lived in our time. He never thought of himself as working alone. He always thought of himself as part of a team. Bonnani, Albertini, Cristaldi, and others are always mentioned as being among his closest collaborators.¹ In telling the stories of the early missions and retreats one hears of several missionaries working together with brothers in service, and even lay-collaborators. The effects or fruits of the mission were maintained by seeking out suitable people among the laity who could continue these associations that were begun by the mission. And in advising his missionaries, he would always remind us not to trust in our own thinking alone, but to work together with others for the common good. “Clinging to one's own opinions and rejecting the advice of others” was one of the things that Gaspar assigned to the “miserable condition” of us humans.

“God has no need of people in his work; we are the ones who reap benefits from his Society. The Lord will multiply his gifts for those who remain and it will be sufficient that on our part we do what is required of us. In addition to that, through prayer, let us place it in God’s hands, and let us never cease to take counsel with one another as the opportunities arise. Let us surrender our own will in all things and we shall have died to ourselves.”²

The scriptures themselves call us to a common life. This is not just the property of religious and clergy but something common to all the faithful who believed together and “had all things in common.”³

In a Precious Blood Parish every effort should be made to work together as a team in response to the Blood of Christ that has drawn us together and also responding to the example of St. Gaspar. The

¹ “Historical Sketches of the C.P.P.S.,” Andrew Pollack, C.P.P.S.

² Letter 1638

³ Acts 2:42-47

Team approach is very difficult in an American society that is built on individual achievement, as well as in a church where everyone thinks that everything depends on Father. I cannot say that I succeed in establishing a true team, but I can say that I put some effort into it. I constantly reminded the other members of the Pastoral Team that they did not work for me, but that we worked together for the Lord and for the Community as a whole. They were not my “staff.” We gathered together as a Team in the parish; myself along with the other clergy, the Parish Secretary who functioned more as an administrator, The Music Director, The Director of Faith Formation (Religious Education), the Principal of the parish Elementary School, A Director of Volunteers, and a coordinator for Outreach and Justice. For several years I was the only priest on the team and having a team approach proved to be essential. Each member of the team had a job description that was designed to give them responsibility and authority. Most of them had a budget for their work. They had complete freedom in their ministries and did not need to come to Father to ask for permission.

We met together on a weekly basis first of all for prayer. We used the liturgy of Hours. More often than not we chanted the psalms together led by me or by the music director. Another would do the reading. Another would lead us in intercessions, and another would conclude the prayer. I would not need to prepare a prayer each week because each member of the team took responsibility for their part of the prayer on a revolving schedule. One week you would be responsible for gathering the team in prayer, the next week you would be responsible for the psalm. The following week you would bring the scripture reading and then in subsequent weeks you would be responsible for determining the silence after the reading and inviting us in intercession, or closing with a concluding prayer. Over the years this happened in very simple and natural ways without a lot of effort.

In a very busy and active parish the administration of the facilities calendar became a central part our weekly gathering. This part of the meeting was conducted by the Coordinator of the Volunteers who

was responsible for the calendar. All of the ministries represented by the team brought their calendars to the weekly meeting and events were placed on the common calendar here. In this way there were no conflicts in the community calendar and everyone on the team generally knew what was going on in all aspects of the parish ministry.

The next thing we would do together was some common formation. Study and on-going formation for the clergy was a regular feature of St. Gaspar's mission houses and it was to become part of our work and ministry too. It was a way for all of us to remain current and to learn new things together. Since we were a multicultural parish the team read together the San Francisco Archdiocesan text on Filipino devotions which proved to be helpful and enlightening, and we also read the "Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Culture" and some of the Jubilee reflections presented by the CBCP, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines. We read together "Ecclesia in America," the post-synodal apostolic exhortation by John Paul II, and we studied The "General Directory for Catechesis" together. With educators, administrators, talented artists, and dedicated activists working together on the same text bringing together their varying perspectives, it gave life to our common mission and helped each of us to appreciate the people we were working with. This kind of study was very simple. We decided on the text we were to study together. We would select the passage or chapter for next week's discussion together, and the weekly discussion took no more than fifteen or twenty minutes.

We would also do business together. We would discuss annual budgets, major projects, evaluate programs and set goals. We talked about Welfare Reform and how it affected our people. We spoke of School and Parish anniversaries and set the planning in motion. We talked about focusing Faith Formation on the adults and not just the children, and we contemplated distribution of communion from the cup at school liturgies. We would not always agree with each other, but we were always able to listen respectfully. Everything was established by consensus and very rarely did I ever see the need to

act unilaterally. I tend to be creative and people on the team playfully gave me a “bad time” when I said I was thinking of something new. They generally thought that it would mean more work for them. But they always gave my proposals a respectful listening, and when they shared from their own perspective it generally broadened the project and made it richer. One of the most difficult things we had to do was administer the Parish hall that was used by so many different groups in the parish. Having people in the team who had administered their own family homes for years, as well as having been teachers and community organizers helped significantly and provided a vast amount of insight, more than one or two priests could muster up by themselves.

In many ways this was a learning experience for me. A Parishioner would float an idea by me on a Sunday morning and would get an encouraging and affirming nod from me if it sounded like something good. Unbeknownst to me they would often take it then as Gospel and proceed as if I had given permission. I slowly learned to say things like, “Maybe you should talk to Peggy about that.” or “I think that is Sr. Madeline’s responsibility.” or “give me a call when I have a calendar in front of me” or even, “come to the Rectory after Mass and we will put a meeting on my calendar, or I will get you the right phone number or form.”

It was also a learning experience for the team members. I remember once when our Music Director had wanted to prepare a worship aid for the entire Triduum, including the Music of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday Morning. So he came to me to ask permission to take the hymnals out of the pews for the Triduum since the books we had were too big and too confusing and we could provide a better worship aid. I surprised him when I said he should go consult with the music director, with himself, about that since the decision would ultimately be made there, and maybe he could seek advice from the Team at their next meeting. In actual fact it was an

inspired suggestion and improved the singing on Easter Sunday over the previous year when the people had crowded into the pews and ended up putting the hymnals on the floor.

The team approach simply makes sense to me from a human perspective, but it becomes even more essential when you realize that we are bound together by an incredible bond of charity in his Precious Blood. For a priest who lived in that great big rectory alone, it gave witness to the words I could speak about communion and community on a Sunday morning.

2. Inclusive, all-embracing

The second principle of Precious Blood Ecclesiology in Parish life is our ability to be inclusive and all-embracing. This in many ways is related to the principles of collaboration, as we include the team member experiences and perspectives in making pastoral decisions. But in many ways I think this principle stretches us even further. Our spirituality is supposed to extend us as we are supposed to broaden the world by our preaching and our presence. So maybe this principle will extend and expand you and me in ways we would not expect to go, or in directions that may astonish.

Two centuries later, another Pope summons the sons of Saint Gaspar to be no less bold in their decisions and actions - to go where others cannot or will not go and to undertake missions which seem to hold little hope of success.⁴

In California we have lots of conversations about being inclusive, especially about what is called “inclusive language.” So first I must tell you that I am growing to dislike the term “inclusive” as it is used in our culture today. I am leaning more and more to the phrase “all-embracing.” In some of my own experiences inclusive intentions have sometimes had exclusive results. I believe the motives are good, but it strikes me as a bit odd, when I am presiding at Eucharist to hear the assembly respond with conflicting voices. Some say, “For the praise and glory of his name,” and others say, “for the praise and

⁴ John Paul II, September 14, 2001

glory of God's name;" and half the congregation says. "It is right to give him thanks and praise;" while the other half says "It is right to give God thanks and praise." In the Spanish language this is not a problem, it is simply "es justo y necesario." It seems that in a desire to create more inclusiveness we may have begun to re-create Babel, fostering divisions, taking personal and individual initiative in a corporate prayer, the very opposite of communion. Maybe these are the confessions of one who completed his theological training in Berkeley, CA and was fully immersed in the ways of "inclusive" language, but who has been converted somewhat by his experiences of seven years in a parish where the majority did not have English as their first language. For most, it simply was not a question. They were more interested in paying the bills, especially the rent, and raising the kids. And when it did become a question, it was a language question, not one of faith or life. In that context "inclusive" language did more to confuse and confound than to unite and include. No words we use will ever encompass the mystery we gather to celebrate, and any solutions to this question will always fall short of embracing the ineffable.

But the people wanted to be included. They wanted their lives and their stories to make sense. They wanted to belong, and they wanted me to belong, to belong to them and to their lives and experience. They are the ones who taught me what it meant to be inclusive or all-embracing. This was accomplished more by meals and by festivals than by language. But meals and festivals and family and tradition are what describe Asian culture. I had to listen to their voice, and to hear their experience. I had to learn the hard way that there were many things that I took for granted that they had no idea of. The word "no" is apparently a word they cannot use if you are to honor the other person. So when a woman arrives at the sacristy door on a Saturday morning and informs me I will be a guest at their family celebration that evening, I cannot say "no." That would dishonor her, and her family, and they would never venture an invitation again. What I learned to say was always in the positive: "I have the

afternoon confessions followed by Mass and afterwards there is the Italian Catholic Federation dinner.” They would then simply say, “Ok, Father we will make it another time.”

It may seem very simple, but it was difficult to learn. My first reaction would have been to say “No, I cannot.” In that culture, that would have been disrespectful and dishonoring. I had to learn respect the way it was practiced in Asian culture, not the way I had learned in Irish-American culture.

In Retrouvaille, a ministry for troubled marriages, we assist people in their learning how to receive their spouse as a person, not as an image or an idea. This skill is essential in parish life, especially in a multi-cultural context. To learn to receive them as people the way they are and not necessarily the way I want them to be. To be all-embracing was to learn their way of being included and to honor them.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace.⁵

Paul was speaking about Jews and Gentiles being formed into one person through the Blood of Christ. These factions had difficulty even speaking to each other, let alone dining from a common dish. The Blood of Christ obliterates a wall that in their mind stands for centuries, making us one. We do not have to learn how to eat out of the common dish with the uncircumcised. But we need to learn to include others and their world view into our family.

I will have some more examples of how to include different understandings of prayer and devotion in another section of this talk, but I would like to suggest another means by which we include

⁵ Eph 2:13-15

others. One of our Brothers can speak more eloquently about how offering an occasional mass in Spanish enabled hundreds of unknowns to appear, as if out of the shadows. Even in our homogenous parishes we need to learn how to include the rest of the world. One of the ways we can do that is through music, or the use of color or fabric designs. I remember one Sunday, years ago, leading the song “Pescadore de Hombres” in a pretty homogenous parish out in California. A deacon at that Parish who was from Mexico would be ordained priest in a couple of months and his first Mass would be celebrated at the parish. So we need a few Spanish songs in our repertoire. I was approached after Mass by a gentleman who complained about the Spanish song. “After all,” he stated, “we are Americans here.” Yes we value our homeland, but here we are citizens of Heaven, as St Paul wrote to the Philippians.⁶ Teaching our people how to reverence the Word of God in another language even if they do not understand it is vital in leading us to celebrate the liturgy in our new homeland. We do not necessarily understand each other, but we can embrace each other.

3. Generous

In Christ and through his blood, we have been redeemed, and our sins forgiven, so immeasurably generous is God’s favor to us.⁷

This is a favorite passage from St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians that we pray each Monday evening in the Liturgy of Hours. It forms the basis for my third essential Element of Precious Blood Spirituality. We are talking about a generosity without measure, beyond our imagination. Since God has been unreasonably generous with us, it is imperative that we witness some of that generosity for the world. As a Precious Blood priest this encompasses everything from the way I hear confessions, to the time I

⁶ Phil 3:20

⁷ Eph. 1:6

am willing to spend with the difficult tasks, and to the types of ministry that I involve myself and the parish in.

One other favorite scripture passage is the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke's Gospel. It has been my privilege and honor over the past ten years to minister in the "Retrouvaille" program in this country, a ministry for troubled marriages, and share that story with countless people. The people that we minister to have a great thirst for this generosity, especially if they come to us in pain, hurt and wounded.

It was Maria de Mattias who said:

*For the triumph of his mercy and to show his infinite love for us, our divine redeemer, Jesus Christ shed his precious blood with great suffering and humiliation, as the price of salvation and glory. He gave it all, he gave it for all, and he does not stop giving it. His Blood is a fountain, or rather, a life giving river available to all.*⁸

One of the surprises I discovered in the short time I have been in ministry is the number of times I have heard the sin of abortion in the confessional. Many times it was people coming to confession finally after many years of struggle with doubt and guilt. Without minimizing the enormity of the fault, it is essential that we provide welcome and assistance. To describe the vastness of the younger son's guilt in the prodigal son parable (there was absolutely no commandment or tradition he did not transgress) was somehow comforting in this context, especially when describing the efforts the Father went to in celebrating the return of his son. This is what we offer to the church's sons and daughters too. Of great help was the Diocese in which I worked. They had an "After the Choice" program and support which proved to be quite beneficial and healing. We could not keep the posters and cards with the information in stock in our book racks.

⁸ Blessed Maria de Mattias

We returned the favor to the Diocese in our parish's work on Annulments. We discovered that there was a great deal of fear and ignorance on this topic, and the publication of various books and articles in the popular media was compounding the problem. With two Precious Blood Companions we set out to form a workshop on Annulments and offered it two or three times a year in the parish. After a while we noticed that nearly all the other parishes in the diocese placed our notices in their bulletins, and many pastors were sending their parishioners to us to process their annulments.

This generosity extends to the very least. The AIDS epidemic impacted our city in significant ways. We were part of creating a deanery HIV/AIDS education and Outreach Ministry. It was gratifying to see, when the call went out in announcements and bulletins, donations of supplies and food for a Baby with AIDS filling up the front parlor. The Parishioners respond to this generosity, in turn being very generous themselves.

4. Prayer, Corporate Prayer

My fourth principle of Precious Blood Spirituality incarnated in a parish setting is Prayer. This may seem a self evident quality in parish life, but for us I think it takes on a special character. I carry around in my calendar several passages from St. Gaspar on prayer. One of my favorites is from a letter in 1821 where he says, "let us develop everything by the use of prayer."⁹

In a time very different from our own, March 1831, St. Gaspar describes in a letter to Pope Gregory XVI how in the morning one of the missionaries takes the first mass of the day "while another of the Missionaries recites with the people the Chaplet of the Divine Blood." Later on Gaspar continues that on Fridays and feast days, the confessional is a "common responsibility." In describing the missionary's method of life in the Mission House, Gaspar sets the tone for a context of prayer.

⁹ St Gaspar, 1821

In listening to the needs of people in the local situation I have to set aside my own style and desires for corporate prayer. We listen to their experience. We let them tell their story and they enable us to tell our story.

One day a delegation of parishioners came asking if the church could hold a perpetual novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help every Wednesday and celebrate with Mass and dinner her annual feast as they had done back home in the Philippines at the Redemptorist shrine. I recognized their devotion and their desire to create an experience that would nourish their spirituality. I explained to them that we were not Redemptorists, but that we could certainly include their devotion. I told them the story of St. Gaspar Del Bufalo and his devotion to Mary, Help of Christians. These devotions could certainly be related. Members of the parish, the parish music director and I set about fashioning a service for the local church. We included prayers and songs from the shrine in the Philippines, adding a few nods to the liturgical year. We used the Prayer of Mary, Help of Christians and another Precious Blood prayer. We involved all of the Filipino organizations in the parish with Precious Blood Companions. Soon we had a particularly satisfying home grown weekly event which drew 150 to 200 people to the parish church. But what is particularly “Precious Blood” about the experience? This type of Marian devotion gives us an opportunity to provide a gentle, suitably adapted catechesis on God's presence in suffering, on God's love and desire to bring all people near, on the value of human flesh and blood, on Jesus and now every human person becomes a bearer of Christ, and on Mary as an active disciple. This gathering is an experience of corporate intercession including the needs of the local church and the universal church. Like St. Gaspar's missions, it is centered on a devotional picture created especially for the local devotion. Various Precious Blood Missionaries or Companions take their turn leading and presiding. It is a common responsibility. We cannot imitate the exact outline of St. Gaspar's devotion, but we can

certainly imitate the spirit of his mission and devotion. Like St. Gaspar, in this prayer we dedicate all our life and work to the care of Mary Help of Christians.

The devotion to the Eucharist in this parish was an inspiration. It provided the easiest forum in which to promote and share a devotion to Blood of Christ. Each Friday we held a Precious Blood Holy Hour with Adoration, Precious Blood readings, songs and prayers. Precious Blood Companions are actively involved in the planning of the readings and music. The experience has borne fruit in seeing members from other parishes join in, in hearing comments from parishioners on how much they have learned about the importance of the Blood of Christ, and in seeing many inquire into becoming Precious Blood Companions.

Every Wednesday early in the morning, a group composed of Missionaries, Companions and other interested parishioners joined together in a prayer called “Center on the Word.” Here we focused directly on the scriptures, entered in an experience of Communal “Lectio Divina.” This experience allowed us to experience the Word of God on a personal level, and seek ways to put it into practice. We are not monks, but entering into this ancient monastic practice we follow a mission given to us by St. Gaspar himself. First of all he called us to center our lives on the preaching of the word. Next he declared that our principle is the same as that of our ancestors in the faith: “we are apostles on the road, Carthusians at home.” Our corporate work is given life by corporate contemplation on the mysteries of the Precious Blood and the Word of God.

Prayer places us in solidarity with a broken world. We are inspired by stories of other Missionaries and Precious Blood Sisters who have gathered in prayer in the name of our community and spirituality at public incidents. “Not in our name” gatherings on the occasion of capital punishment and prayers of solidarity in the face of local violence have called us to respond as well. A few years back the wife of a pastor in a small church at the other end of the island was brutally murdered in her home.

Efforts by the other local churches to respond to the tragedy were rebuffed by this small fundamentalist congregation, but it was a Precious Blood Companion in our church who was instrumental in formulating a citywide response to the situation, where all the churches in the city were open for the same hour on a Friday night for prayer in solidarity with this small congregation and its widowed Pastor.

It is not just about prayer, but prayer that leads us to what Gaspar would call the on-going urban mission. In listening to the desires of the several cultures in their prayer life, we also were able to draw them into becoming Precious Blood Companions involved in ministry. Our churches still endeavor to offer a continuous mission, providing “a continual and shared cultivation of the people.” That is the gift and the call that St. Gaspar has given us.

5. Contemplative

My fifth essential element has to do with a contemplative spirit. We are called to pay attention to the signs of the time. We live in a world that is filled with individualism, becoming increasingly militaristic, and gradually more and more exclusive. The world in which we live is slowly becoming turned in upon itself. The local press and the National Network Television news decreasingly reports on anything that happens outside our local boundaries. The joys and sorrow, pains and hopes of the world are hidden from us. We fear the pictures on our television screens that challenge our compassion. We are powerless in the face of war, famine and the tragedies of the world. Corporate Precious Blood attention and prayer in the face of this powerlessness teaches us. We do not need to imitate the world in its desire to gain power. We can simply learn to hold the world in God’s embrace of the powerlessness of the cross.

One of the benefits of the modern world to pay attention to is the Internet. Some Internet Service Providers provide the ability to get news of the world. Unfortunately, one day alone is enough to fill

your “inbox” with reports of violence and bloodshed near and far. This is the very stuff that the local newspaper and Evening News shields us from. And yet it is something we need to hold. Just as we hold the death of the Lord deep in our hearts, and rise to new life in him, we must hold the pain of our world in our prayer. Otherwise our prayer becomes disconnected from life and the world in which we live.

St. Gaspar called us several times to read the “book of the cross.” At prayer with the cross, according to the model given by the community of Taize, the Cross is laid down in the midst of the assembly and the whole community comes forward one by one to place their forehead on the cross. Then in faith, each one rises to new life, returning to the community in song. The use of a variety of languages, the use of Blood of Christ and covenant scriptures, in harmony with the liturgical year, the participation of many facets of the parish provide a rich, all-embracing, corporate, and formative experience.

Another way of “Holding the World” is the celebration of Liturgy of Hours. In the Parish we celebrated Liturgy of Hours or Solemn Vespers around special feasts like the memorial of Blessed Maria de Mattias. Each year, on All Souls Day, we celebrated Evening Prayer with the participants bringing pictures of their departed loved ones to place before the altar. The Easter candle was incensed during the Magnificat, and so were all the pictures. Every year in the fall we observed an annual “Witness of Blood,” commemorating Precious Blood Martyrs.

So what makes this being Contemplative special to a Precious Blood parish? Aside from the directive from Gaspar quoted earlier, “be Carthusians at home,” it responds to his vision of paying attention to what is needed and doing it. We cry out clearly and with compassion when life is lost and blood is shed, including in our prayer the whole world redeemed by the Blood of Christ.

6. Missionary

Even though I was assigned to a parish ministry for seven years, I remained a precious Blood Missionary. This may seem self explanatory yet sometimes, when we become parochial, we lose our identity as missionary. So it became important for me to make this one of the essential principles of my parish experience. Maybe “missionary” should be the first principle instead of the sixth, but these previous ones serve to define the missionary experience for me. So how does one become more than parochial?

Simply being part of this community was very helpful to me in this regard. In the early years this was facilitated by being part of a “Sonnino Mission Team” based in Berkeley that spent time developing and refining and preaching a Precious Blood Mission. Several of us spent time developing this mission, and then as a pilot a team of four preached it at St. Barnabas parish, and we invited the parishioners to help us evaluate the experience. In this way we invited them to become missionary too in assisting us in spreading the good news afar.

I have already mentioned the Annulment workshops and the Advocacy work we did, not just for our own parishioners but for the whole Diocese.

The HIV/AIDS Ministry, which was spoken of before, was a deanery mission and not just of the parish. These endeavors tended to expand us beyond our parochial boundaries. We had some frustrating moments with this ministry simply because in our experience they tended to be a little too parochial. We had a difficult time getting them to include the whole world in “World AIDS Day”, yet we were benefited by having a Precious Blood Companion who is employed at the School of Public Health at the University of California take the leadership in educating us and expanding our horizons on this worldwide issue.

I have mentioned Retrouvaille too. This was a ministry I participated in throughout the diocese, and now of course since I am no longer in parish ministry, has propelled me into an International Ministry.

All of these ministries, hosted by the parish, facilitated by the parish, and sprung from the parish community serving the wider community of Diocese and beyond. All of these ministries are special to me as a Precious Blood Missionary simply because they are ministries to the hurt, the broken, and the abandoned and cast off. This is where I am sent as a Precious Blood missionary, and it was something that expanded the boundaries of parish life, not just for me, but also for the people in the parish.

The parishioners really did not have any trouble belonging to a larger church than their own parish simply because so many of them came from a wide variety of countries. I would think though that even a parish administered by us, if they were all Irish, or German or Hispanic or African-American, or Asian, they should still be called to look beyond their boundaries to the world in need, not simply to hold the world in prayer but maybe to twin with parishes in other countries and to expand our services outside our boundaries.

7. Explicit

The seventh and last (but certainly not least) principle of Precious Blood Spirituality is the call to be explicit about who we are and what we do, not as an institution but as a people. We profess a graphic and earthy Spirituality. Beyond the cross tipped churches, the lovely art work, the smells and bells and wonderful music, there is an appalling and hideous experience, a shameful death. The voice of Blood calls insistently from the ground, the blood of Abel and all the martyrs and the Blood of Jesus, the blood of innocents yearning for homeland, whether in Palestine, or Israel, or Ohio, or Alameda, CA. Our spirituality immerses us in the paschal mystery wherever people are hurting or in fear, whether they be filled with hopes and dreams, or joys and sorrow. This involves us in their lives. If we are going to make our spirituality real, if we are to recover a prophetic voice, we have to involve ourselves in people's lives where they are most in need.

When the city government seeks to tear down 500 units of units of former navy housing that could be refurbished and sold or rented at affordable prices in a city and a county where affordable housing is lacking, and rents are too high, it is time for the Missionaries and Companions of the Precious Blood to speak. It was our community that formed the inspiration for a city wide effort known as “Renewed Hope,” a collection of churches and activists that eventually sued the city and forced them to provide affordable housing. It was in our Church that the city gathered for prayer and then formed a march through the city to the housing site.

When the State of California goes to the ballot box to deny medical care and education to children of immigrants, it was the Precious Blood Missionaries and Companions the flooded the City with Catholic Social Teaching and surrounded city hall with a circle of candles and gathered all the churches to speak at the City Council meeting.

When the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) in Southern California was so understaffed as to force thousands of eligible people, legal residents, to wait two years for their interview to become citizens, it was Precious Blood Missionaries, it was a Precious Blood parish that not only spoke out, but acted out so that the voices of the people would be heard. Over time the wait to become citizen was reduced through our efforts from two years to three months. And the hundreds of thousands of undocumented people: our country would refer to them as illegal aliens, but no human being, in and of themselves, is illegal or alien, not in our eyes, not in God’s eyes. There is a crying need; it is the voice of blood, for there to be a new amnesty for these people. We are called to be their voice.

When one of our parishioners, a lovely young woman, and mother of two children was brutally murdered by her estranged husband who had stalked her for weeks, it was the Precious Blood Missionaries and companions who gathered the city and spoke out and provided information to our

parish and beyond on Domestic Violence and continue to make clear to this day what resources are available to those in need. Knowing that the Blood of Christ was mingled with the blood of our beloved parishioner gave us the strength to live through the events following the murder and to provide compassionate support and help to her children and other family members. This event was an opportunity, unwelcome though it was, for the people of our parish to demonstrate what it means to be Precious Blood people who are part of a Precious Blood Parish – people of faith and hope in the midst of tragedy and a community united through the Blood of Christ in love and compassion.

Who will speak if we don't? This is not my voice; this is not Fr. Delaney's voice or Fr. Ron's; this is not Peggy or John Doherty's voice. We cannot say that this topic of preaching on Catholic Social Teaching is just "Fr. Jeff's thing." It is the voice of Blood. It is the voice of Jesus calling out for all people. And we are called to be clear in everything, this is who we are and this is the voice we respond to.

Conclusion

To be a Precious Blood Parish, we are called to be explicit about who we are, missionary in everything we do, never confined by parish boundaries, aware of the sign of the times and the needs of our people. We are a people who develop everything by prayer, and witness to the immeasurable generosity of God. And we are formed as one body, a team of Missionaries, Adorers, Sisters, brothers, Companions, men and women, young and old, from every continent. We embrace the world so that all may know the sign, expression, measure and pledge of God's extravagance. Each of you in your own way, as part of the Precious Blood family, have witnessed to these essentials. Thank you for letting me share part of my story and my family with you, gracias, maraming salamat. (Spanish, Tagalog)