



Bloodlines

Newsletter of the Atlantic Province
Fall 2017

From the Provincial Council

On Thursday, August 24, 2017, the Provincial Council met in Niagara Falls, Ontario, at the Provincial Centre at 10:00 a.m. All Council Members were present: Fr. Mario, Fr. John, Fr. Ronald Wiecek, and Fr. Michael. Fr. Peter Nobili was also present for the first part of the meeting until we finished the financial report.

Among personnel matters Fr. Mario informed the Council that Fr. Timothy Coday has requested a transfer to the Kansas City Province which has been approved. The current and future needs of our elder members was also discussed.

Fr. Peter made note that all the corporations related to the province need to be updated annually, something he did on July 4, 2017. Fr. Mario as corporate head and Fr. Ron as secretary proceeded to sign the documents for each corporation.

A discussion took place about the implications of the Business Assembly's decision that those not involved in formation may not live at the Merlini Study Centre. Fr. Peter has been investigating properties in the GTA and our financial viability if we were to purchase something in the Toronto area.

Fr. Michael then gave an update on our formation program and Fr. Mario a summary of the recent Community Life Symposium in Rome.

Attention was then given to membership on various standing and ad hoc committees in the province with the following appointments or recommendation to be finalized by the provincial upon contacting the relevant persons:

The Statute Revision Committee (appointed): Fr. John, Fr. Phil Smith and Fr. Gary Luiz.

The Formation/Vocation Committee (appointed): Fr. Augusto Menichelli, Fr. Alarey Abello, Fr. Michael, Fr. Sam D'Angelo, and Fr. Lui Santi.

Niagara/Gaspar Mission House Committee (recommended): Fr. Gary, Fr. Peter, Fr. Alarey, and Fr. Sam. This committee will be charged with the dual tasks of looking at the overall viability of the Gaspar Mission House and the possibility of the house becoming a House of Discernment.

The Mission Committee (recommended): Ms. Tries, Mr. Andrew and Mrs. Tina Springer, Fr. Lui, Fr. Patrick, and Fr. Josephat.

The Finance/Investment Committee (recommended): Fr. Peter, Fr. Mario, Mr. Pleginakos, and Mrs. Maria Mateyk.

On the agenda for the next council meeting, in the interests of fleshing out a five-year plan in response to the *acta* and other comments from the Assembly, will be the evaluation of current ministries and a concrete plan for transitioning out of Tanzania.

CALENDAR

OCTOBER

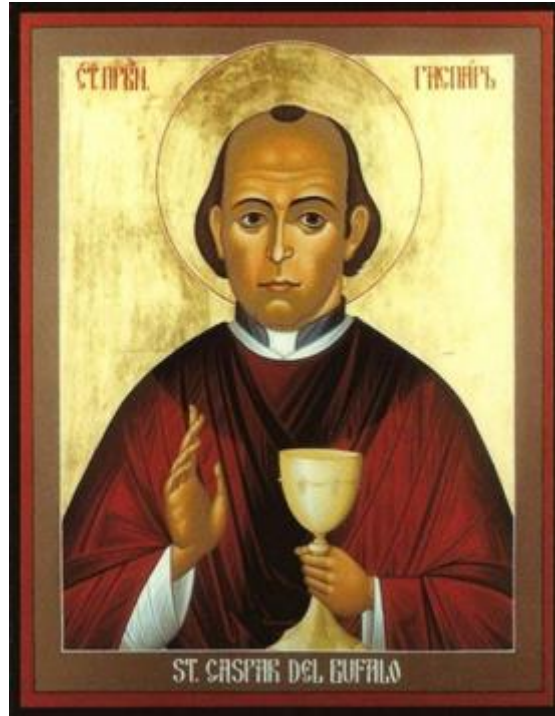
- 1 I – Peter Nobili (1964)
- 7 D – John Zywolewski (1993)
- 19 B – Brendan Doherty (1940)
- 20 O – Jeffrey Finley (1990)
- 20 I – Augusto Menichelli (2004)
- 21 **SOLEMNITY OF ST. GASPAR DEL BUFALO**
- 22 James Reposkey (1972)
- 26 O – Gregorio Hernandez Cortes (2015)
- 29 B – ITALO-AMERICAN DELEGATION EST. - 1928
(Fr. Nicola Santoro – 1st superior)

NOVEMBER

- 4 I – Ronald Mahon (1975)
- 9 D – Oreste Cerbara (1990)
- 10 D - Patrick Sena (2012)
- 18 B – Gary Luiz (1950)
- 20 B – William Mnyagatwa (1946)

DECEMBER

- 3 **FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER**
- 3 I – Brendan Doherty (1979)
- 3 I John Colacino (1979)
- 3 I – Mario Cafarelli (1983)
- 3 I – Lui Santi (1983)
- 3 I – William Mnyagatwa (1992)
- 3 I – Sam D’Angelo (1998)
- 3 I – Alarey Abella (2006)
- 3 I – Michael Mateyk (2010)
- 3 I – Patrick Gilmurray (2011)
- 5 O – Augusto Menichelli (2005)
- 18 **GASPAR DEL BUFALO BEATIFIED BY POPE ST. PIUS X (1904)**
- 19 D – Richard Masciangelo (1994)
- 22 B – Alaray Abella (1969)
- 28 D – St. Gaspar Del Bufalo (1837)



Voice of the Founder

“Let us remain in the adorable wounds of Jesus Christ, preparing ourselves for the years of eternity so that we can be reunited with the center of every joy” (Letter 1497).



Provincial Retreat

June 11-15, 2018
Mt. Carmel Centre; Niagara Falls, ON

Retreat Director:

Fr. Scott Lewis SJ

*Vice President and Dean
Associate Professor of New Testament*

*Regis College
Toronto ON*

More Scenes from the Provincial Assembly



Member Profile



Rev. Ron Mahon C.P.P.S.

I was born on January 4, 1951 in Chicago, Illinois to Leo W. Mahon and Shirley Ann Strom both of whom are deceased. My siblings are Marilyn Bly, Kathleen Aguilar, and Sherry Mahon, and Robert Mahon, the last of whom is also deceased. My primary and secondary education took place in the Chicago area and I belonged St. Mary of Mt Carmel parish, administered at the time by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. I entered formation in Rochester, New York and did my philosophical and theological studies at Saint Bernard's Seminary finishing in May, 1977. I was ordained at St. Anthony's Church in Rochester on March 25 of that same year where I undertook my first assignment. I also hold degrees in education and psychology.

I came to Canada in September 1979 to work in the Archdiocese of Toronto at St. Roch's parish. Having received my teacher certification, I joined the faculty at Chaminade College School January 1982 where I taught for 35 years. I taught all curriculums within the theology department and served as department head. I also taught in the English department.

On three occasions, I ministered as a pastor of parishes in both the U.S. and Canada. During my pastorate in the U.S I also administrated two parochial elementary schools.

I have been trained and certified in Clinical Pastoral Care to minister to the needs of those in hospital. I held the post of chaplain at Palos Community Hospital, Palos, Illinois.

Over the years, I was on the lecture circuit giving marriage courses and spiritual retreats as well as a being a keynote speaker on issues of hospice care, the dignity of death and dying and the modern dilemma of political correctness and issues of morality.

After retiring from teaching, I was appointed pastor of Saint Joseph's Parish, Stevensville, Ontario in the Diocese of St. Catharine. I am presently serving in the Diocese of Orlando where I enjoy the faculties of the diocese under Bishop John Noonan. I minister in many different parishes in the diocese, including the cathedral and the National Shrine of Our Lady Queen of the Universe. I enjoy these assignments.

I came to Orlando, however, to teach at Bishop Moore High School and to do chaplaincy work, but that ended after one year due to my having cancer of the esophagus. Surgery removed 3/4 of the esophagus, 2/3 my stomach and 1/4 of my right lung. Recovery is hard and long and I am still visiting specialists for ongoing treatment. I have been totally surprised by the attention given to me during this time over and beyond my 40 years of ministry to God's people. The passage of time responding to God's call from God is a daily celebration of joy, but to be recognized by family and the C.PP.S community is an honor and a privilege for "a prophet is seldom accepted in his own village." Even Jesus had a difficult time in Nazareth! This is not the case with all who are endeared to me. I love the many occasions to be prophet and priest in the midst of prayer and worship of the God who is love. I welcome those entering formation this year. God's grace be with you. Choosing the C.PP.S is rewarding and living the charism of Saint Gaspar is something that will offer you your reward.

The Renewal of our Community Life: A Continuing Dialogue

In response to the Message of the XX General Assembly, the Congregation has been engaging in a worldwide dialogue on our community life. The mandate from the Assembly was directed towards the renewal of this pillar of our Society of Apostolic Life.

The overall process was coordinated by the General Curia and began in the individual units. Representatives then brought the contributions of the individual dialogues to the Community Life Symposium which was held in Rome on July 24-28, 2017. At the Symposium, diverse and culturally enriched viewpoints on our community life were brought together in the final document "*An Authentic C.PP.S. Community Life.*"

The representatives sought to produce a document that was grounded in a rich theological vision of community life and one which would lead to the development of a praxis of C.PP.S. community life. The desire is that this document will stimulate further reflection and dialogue among the members.

An Authentic C.PP.S. Community Life

In the spirit of Saint Gaspar, we are a community which sees, hears, and responds to the cry and call of the Blood of Christ in the world today. United in the bond of charity, our sacred

relationship reveals the presence of the trinitarian God among and within each of us. Our community life helps each of us to reach our full potential as missionary disciples and gives witness to the Gospel of Christ. Our mission houses are safe places of dialogue where we value equality and create an atmosphere of trust and joy. Inspired by the open arms and heart of the crucified Christ we are sincerely present to one another and appreciate others as gift while recognizing our brokenness and need for conversion. Our charism calls us to be reconciled to each other so that we can be a reconciling presence in the world. Marked by the Blood of Christ, our communion impels us to deepen our relationships with one another and our lay associates. We acknowledge living together in mission houses is the ideal promoted in our policies and practices. We recognize there will be exceptions.

We challenge ourselves to live our commitment to communion in concrete ways by:

- committing ourselves to a simple life style. We live in solidarity with others by putting their needs before our own.
- embracing a prayer life which is enriched by the prayers of the Congregation, contemplation, the sharing of the Word, and the celebration of the Eucharist.
- sharing meals together.
- engaging in a program of ongoing formation and spiritual renewal.
- gathering for house congresses, social, and recreational times.
- being hospitable to one another, especially our most vulnerable members, lay associates, and visitors.
- devoting time to Congregational events and celebrations.
- practicing co-responsibility in sustaining our community life.
- developing best stewardship practices of our human and natural resources.

Una vida comunitaria C.PP.S. auténtica

En el espíritu de San Gaspar, somos una comunidad que ve, escucha y responde al grito y a la llamada de la Sangre de Cristo en el mundo de hoy. Unidos en el vínculo de la caridad, nuestra sagrada relación revela la presencia de Dios trino entre nosotros y dentro de cada uno de nosotros. Nuestra vida comunitaria nos ayuda a alcanzar todo nuestro potencial como discípulos misioneros y es también un testimonio del Evangelio de Cristo. Nuestras casas de misión son lugares seguros de diálogo donde valoramos la igualdad y creamos un ambiente de confianza y alegría. Inspirados por los brazos abiertos y por el corazón de Cristo crucificado estamos presentes los unos para los otros y nos apreciamos como don a la vez que reconocemos nuestro quebranto y necesidad de conversión. Nuestro carisma nos llama a estar reconciliados con los demás para poder ser una presencia reconciliadora en el mundo. Marcada por la Sangre de Cristo, nuestra comunión nos impulsa a profundizar nuestras relaciones entre nosotros y con nuestros laicos asociados. Reconocemos que vivir juntos en casas de misión es el ideal que promueven nuestras políticas y prácticas. Reconocemos que habrá excepciones.

Nos interpelamos a nosotros mismos para vivir nuestro compromiso con la comunión de formas concretas:

- Comprometiéndonos a vivir un estilo de vida sencilla. Vivimos en solidaridad con los demás poniendo sus necesidades por delante de las nuestras.
- Llevando una vida de oración enriquecida por las oraciones de la Congregación, la contemplación, el compartir la Palabra, y la celebración de la Eucaristía.
- Compartiendo juntos las comidas.
- Siguiendo un programa de formación continua y de renovación espiritual.
- Reuniéndonos para los congresos de las casas, y los momentos de socialización y recreación.
- Siendo hospitalarios unos con otros, especialmente con los miembros más vulnerables, los laicos asociados y los visitantes.
- Dedicando tiempo a los eventos y celebraciones de la Congregación.
- Practicando la corresponsabilidad en el sostenimiento de la vida comunitaria.
- Desarrollando buenas prácticas para la administración de nuestros recursos humanos y naturales.

This document will be used to continue the dialogue about community life in the units.–Our fundamental goal is the renewal of our lived experience of community. This discussion document will be used to help the members of the unit to explore the implications of the vision and praxis of “An Authentic C.PP.S. Community Life.” Two questions are offered to guide this discussion: How can this vision for the community life be realized in our unit? What are the practical, concrete implications for how we share our lives?

Several themes arose during the work of the Symposium which might prove fruitful for your discussions.

Mission and Community Life

There is a recognition that the demands of the apostolate are often viewed as a threat or hindrance to community life. The tendency is to see these two pillars in a dualistic way, competing for our time and energy. Struggling with that creates tension in the member and in the community as personal priorities get applied and diverse expectations are expressed.

A better approach to this issue would be to seek an integration of these two aspects. What would it mean if we could see mission and community life as two sides of the same coin, instead of two distinct and separate ideas in competition for our time and energy?

Community Life as a Witness

Closely related to the first theme, “An Authentic C.PP.S. Community Life” speaks of the witness of community life. Good community life is an outward sign that gives witness to our relationships and to the living of our charism. It also gives witness the Gospel of Christ. We believe that only a reconciled community can be a reconciling presence in the world. Therefore, authentic community life enhances the message we preach.

Fr. Barry Fischer, our former Moderator General, used to speak of community life as our first apostolate. If we recognized community life as part of our mission, how would it affect the rest of our ministry?

Bond of Charity

The Bond of Charity is one of the hallmarks of a Gasparian understanding of community life. “An Authentic C.PP.S. Community Life” calls the Bond of Charity a “sacred relationship that reveals the presence of the trinitarian God among and within each of us.”

Our faith teaches us that the Father, Son, and Spirit are one in divine love. An authentic C.PP.S. community life is grounded in this trinitarian love and our community life is truly a witness to that eternal, communal love of God. What a witness that can be!

Everyone at the Symposium recognized the importance and value of the Bond of Charity. However, the representatives at the Symposium and the entire Congregation are challenged to shift from a mere belief-based understanding, to a practice-based spirituality. Simply put, what does it mean in practical and concrete terms for us to live the Bond of Charity?

While the Bond of Charity may be difficult to define, it is easy to recognize when we see it in practice. We can enrich our dialogue by telling the stories of when we have seen the Bond of Charity expressed concretely in action.

Shared Activity and Depth of Relationships

A clear difference in perspective emerged at the Symposium when we asked “What does good community life look like?”

Some responded with their conviction that living together and the sharing daily in prayer, meals, and activities are essential elements of a good community life.

Others used the term community primarily to describe the quality of a relationship. For them the value of community was measured by the depth of intimacy found in interpersonal sharing, emotional connections, and the commitment to be in relationship. These relationships in community are not dependent on living together.

Both perspectives were included in “An Authentic C.PP.S. Community Life” and it is important that these two perspectives be brought together in all of our units. Personally, and as a unit, how can we respond to the challenge of integrating these two approaches to community life?

August 15th Celebration in Toronto

St. Roch's Church in Toronto was the setting for this year's gathering for the feast of the Assumption and the 202nd anniversary of the foundation of our community. Fr. Luigino, the pastor, welcomed us with open arms and the ladies of the parish, members of the USC and CWL happily hosted the day-long event. Attendees were greeted with a continental breakfast during registration and formally welcomed by Fr. Peter, provincial delegate of the USC. Sr. Mary Catherine of the Sisters of Life delivered the keynote address and even sprinkled her remarks with a little Italian. Other talks were offered by Fr. Phil and Fr. Augusto while Fr. Peter gave the homily at the concelebrated Mass with many of our confreres and priest friends. Annette DeCarolis and Connie Parry assisted with set up the day before and participated in the live panel discussion with Fr. Michael and Fr. Augusto. Fr. Jim led the procession and gave the Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. The music for the day was provided by the Precious Blood Choir and USC members from St Charles parish in Toronto. We're looking forward to more participation next year, so mark your calendar for August 15, 2018 once again at St. Roch's.



New Precious Blood Spirituality Book is Planned

One element of the Pastoral Plan of the General Curia is to continue to deepen the Congregation's appreciation and understanding of our Spirituality. To that end, the General Curia will be publishing a new book of essays on Precious Blood Spirituality.

The book will take a thematic approach with possible themes of how our Spirituality addresses such themes as immigration, violence, care of creation, poverty, LGBT, lay perspectives, feminine perspectives, and intercultural issues. These themes are just a few examples of the possibilities. We want to hear from new and fresh voices. Basically, we want to hear how you are living out our Spirituality in your context today.

We need your help. Are you interested in writing a short essay on one of these topics or a similar topic? Please contact Rev. Jeffrey Kirch, C.PP.S., secgencpps@gmail.com, if you are interested or if you have questions.

The Gaspar Option

(The following article by John Colacino will appear in *The Precious Blood Family* during 2018. It is presented here, slightly adapted, in light of issues raised by the Community Life Symposium).

Alasdair MacIntyre, in his famous book, *After Virtue*, wrote ominously of our age, “It is always dangerous to draw too precise parallels between one historical period and another; and among the most misleading of such parallels are those which have been drawn between our own age in Europe and North America and the epoch in which the Roman empire declined into the Dark Ages. Nonetheless certain parallels there are.” MacIntyre’s prescription for salvaging our post-Christian societies is something like what took place in the Italian countryside away from the corrupting cities and the impending barbarian invasions that would destroy them, namely the budding communities that would become known as “Benedictine monasteries.” He writes how they amounted to the “construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness.... What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us.... We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St Benedict.”

More recently, a book by Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*, has picked up where MacIntyre left off. He argues that, “Rather than wasting energy and resources fighting unwinnable political battles, we should instead work on building communities, institutions, and networks of resistance that can outwit, outlast, and eventually overcome the occupation.” He calls this strategy “the Benedict option.”

Needless to say, his work has generated a great deal of interest and controversy especially among Christians who find it increasingly difficult to live a life of discipleship in the face of a hostile culture. He has also been misunderstood. In a subsequent interview, he clarified that his option does not necessarily mean withdrawal from society a la separatist groups such as the Amish. He suggests instead that, “What we have to do is have a limited retreat from the world ...into our own institutions and communities....building ourselves up spiritually so we can go out in the world and be who Christ asked us to be.” For Christians who thus “exile in place” – like the original Benedictines who not only established humane communities but also preserved the legacy of the classical and early Christian period through their scriptoria and libraries – the Benedict option is also about “building a better future not only for themselves but for everyone around them.” Indeed, the rapid spread of such monastic communities of resistance, as well as the villages and cities that often developed around them, prepared “the way for civilization to return to Western Europe. They tendered within those monasteries the Scriptures, the prayers, the liturgies, and the old ways of doing things. So they became a sort of ark that traveled over the dark sea of time until it found dry land, and there was light after the darkness.”

So Dreher’s option seeks a way for Christians today to be “in the world but not of the world.” In other words, to be countercultural Christians who he hopes “come together within their own communities and even across denominational lines.” And yes, even “to build some

kind of walls to separate ourselves from the world so that we can continue to go out into the world and minister to people and be who Christ asked us to be.”

In addition to Dreher’s “Benedict option,” a host of other approaches has also surfaced as ways for beleaguered Christians to live the present moment in post- or even anti-Christian milieus. These alternative options have often been posed in opposition to Dreher’s suggestion -- mostly because they have misunderstood him to mean Christians ought to withdraw from contemporary society much like St. Benedict withdrew to the countryside to live as a kind of remnant apart from the corruption and dissolution of the Roman Empire. Thus, we have heard of a “David option” which seeks engagement with today’s cultures modeled after King David who went forth to meet the Philistine Goliath with confidence, simplicity and moral authority. Then there is the “Ignatius option” which seeks honest and respectful conversation with cultural opposites in the hope of building a bridge and finding common, if shaky, ground. Fr. James Martin’s recent book *Building a Bridge* on LGBT Catholics and the Church is an example.

Finally, there is Carrie Gress’ recent book *The Marian Option*. In this work she poses the question, “How can we save civilization?” In presenting the Blessed Virgin Mary as the answer to how Christians can respond to a highly secularized and at times hostile, or at least indifferent, stance toward them. She insists that Mary has shown herself to be a potent force in worldly affairs and her intercession a source of protection against the enemies of the gospel. Marian devotion, especially the rosary, is promoted as an antidote to the troubling trends in modern society as well as a stimulus to cultural achievements in music, art, etc. In an interview the author comments that, “There is nothing naïve in believing that Mary can transform our secular world.... Yes, it may seem hard to believe, but I think the evidence of the power and reach of her intercession is overwhelming when looked at altogether.”

I believe each of these “options” has something to contribute to the perplexity confronting many Christians today who are seeking to live “in a world” that can often seem inimical to their faith and at times seeks to eliminate or at least marginalize the role religion can legitimately play in public life. Clearly, Christians cannot acquiesce to the many ways in which a culture demonstrates itself in opposition to their cherished convictions about God’s intentions for human flourishing and betray them by complicit behaviors and viewpoints which are “of the world.”

Of course, discerning between the two is not always easy. Dreher, for example, has no doubts about the cultural markers indicating the imminent collapse of Western civilization. Some Christians would disagree with his assessment of particular instances, or even the degree to which, Western cultures are in fact anti-Christian. Still others would identify areas of concern at least as important as the ones he points to as signs of impending catastrophe. Without descending into tendentious and polarizing disputes about how and where Christians must stand in opposition to the current *zeitgeist*, my proposal of what I call a “Gaspar option” for those indebted to the charisma and spirituality of the Blood of Christ as promoted by the Missionaries who bear that title will hopefully prove to be grounded in a faithful reading of the “signs of the times.”

In doing so, I would like to highlight one feature of Rod Dreher’s “Benedict option” that

I believe is most relevant to proposing a way of living in the world that is inspired by the gasparian charism, namely, the aforementioned importance of “building communities, institutions, and networks of resistance” in the face of a hostile and unreceptive culture. In this regard, St. Gaspar’s own vision of mission houses which were, in his words, meant to be “continuous missions, open to all” (Letter 1309) and indeed “a sacred haven” (Memorandum to Pius VIII) for “the sanctification and the spiritual cultivation of souls” (Letter 2140) provides a template.

In addition to being a residence for the Missionaries themselves and those preparing to be Missionaries, as well as a place where other clergy could attend to their own ongoing formation through prayer and study, these centers were also meant to provide a full range of spiritual services for whoever might be interested -- and this on daily, weekly, monthly and annual bases. These mission houses were also to have a non-parochial church or oratory attached to them for these activities as well as space for retreatants. Without going into detail, suffice it to say Gaspar’s vision was ambitious indeed and one might even say, ideal. Whether such a mission house ever in fact functioned exactly according to plan is for historians to determine. The series of compounds established by the first Missionary to the United States, Fr. Francis de Sales Brunner – who, interestingly, had experience in both a Benedictine and Cistercian monastery before joining the Missionaries of the Precious Blood – did, however, bear some resemblance to the ideals of the gasparian mission house. One historian called these mission stations the “centre of religious influence for a large district.”

The current efforts of the Missionaries who are in a process of “re-imagining” themselves could well look to the essential elements of Gaspar’s vision as the way to ensure a revitalized future in line with their founding charism. As Fr. Joseph Nassal of the Kansas City Province called for in the April 2017 issue of *The Cup of the New Covenant*, I am hoping to contribute to a “dialogue about Gaspar’s vision of a mission house,” one that “will seek to incorporate the values and essential ingredients in that vision into a lived reality.” Among these essential ingredients one must presumably include the three recognized pillars of the Missionaries’ charism, i.e. community, spirituality and apostolate. My suggestions therefore fall under these categories:

Community – Ideally, a mission house would have a stable community of Missionaries and possibly their lay associates who would work together to foster a welcoming place for clergy and laity alike who are seeking support for living in the world today while helping people create sufficient distance from the corrosive effects of secularization. In addition to providing adequate personnel, including leadership roles – which can certainly be shared with those who frequent the mission house -- the sponsoring unit of the Missionaries must also ensure that a mission house is financially viable. This commitment of members and resources is essential if these fledgling institutions are to flourish, especially if they are new foundations just getting their footing. Obviously, the size and scope of a mission house will be a function of the availability of such resources. However situated, such houses should be recognized for their hospitality and for regular activities congruent with the Missionaries’ charism. Nor should the Missionaries’ own continuing formation be neglected in such places and those in formation to be Missionaries need to receive preparation for this ministry.

Spirituality – Programs and activities should be inspired by the great themes suggested by the sign of Christ’s precious Blood “poured out on the Cross and offered daily on the altar,” to quote the traditional Seven Offerings. These include reconciliation, solidarity, and peacemaking.

Apostolate – In addition to the ministries that take place in the mission house itself, a gasparian mission house would also be concerned to form its associates for their own mission and support whatever apostolates they undertake, whether individually or collectively. Like the previous pillar, such engagement in mission should take its cue from the themes arising from the Blood of Christ such as outreach to the marginalized, service to the poor, healing ministries, bringing those “far off, near,” and where appropriate going “outside the camp” to the peripheries of church and society as Pope Francis has called for so insistently.

For almost a quarter century, the Atlantic Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood have had a mission house in Rochester, NY. The house was purchased with a view to several Missionaries being in residence and to function along gasparian lines. Over the years, there have been challenges and limitations preventing a fuller realization of the original intent. While I am currently the only Missionary resident in the house, I have been able in recent years to devote more time and effort to the project and have acquired resources to keep the house afloat financially. As a result, much more is being done to promote the mission house ideal. Our provincial council has recently approved the following statements to guide these efforts:

Mission Statement

The Rochester Mission House provides “a sacred haven” for those seeking to deepen faith in Jesus Christ who inaugurated a new humanity in his Blood and calls men and women to growth in the Spirit after the pattern of his own death and resurrection.

Vision Statement

Inspired by the vision of St. Gaspar del Bufalo, the Rochester Mission House undertakes a variety of ministries that provide opportunities for “the sanctification and the spiritual cultivation of souls.” These include regular celebrations of the Sacred Liturgy; periods of guided prayer and recollection; courses, lay associate programs, publications, and spiritual direction.

Given the “signs of the times,” these ministries seek to make specific contributions to the growth of persons in the following ways:

- by grounding spirituality in the theological and mystical traditions of Western and Eastern Christianity;
- by exploring the interconnection between psychological and spiritual growth;
- by sponsoring ecumenical and interfaith initiatives for promoting mutual respect and understanding;
- by espousing a spirituality of non-violence and peace;
- by outreach to the religiously unaffiliated or disaffected.

Among current initiatives for implementing these statements are the following:

Sunday Eucharist. Weekly readings are sent out in advance along with reflection questions and a homily to help those who attend prepare for the liturgy.

Annual courses whose topics have included James Alison's *Jesus: the Forgiving Victim*; the thought of Teilhard de Chardin in light of Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment; and a course in Mariology and the sophiology of Sergei Bulgakov. The monthly sessions for these courses are preceded by the Sunday Mass and a communal breakfast.

A series of occasional *retreat days* on the Doctors of the Church which so far have included St. John of the Cross, St. Hildegard of Bingen and St. Ephrem the Syrian -- the last of which included a Day of Prayer for Syria.

A monthly *supervisory group* for local spiritual directors following the Shalem Institute's protocol. The house has in the past hosted a 2-year certificate program in spiritual direction under the auspices of Bexley Hall Episcopal Seminary with over 40 graduates. A lesser known insistence of St. Gaspar for his Missionaries was for them to be skilled in the art of spiritual direction according to the teaching of St. Francis de Sales, something he expounded in his treatise *Direttore Diretto* – one of the Founder's writings yet to be translated.

Occasional services, for example, Stations of the Cross during Lent; Tenebrae during Holy Week, and a monthly Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The house also hosts a monthly meeting for a group of people who have made a Marian consecration according to the teaching of St. Louis Grignon de Montfort.

Those who participate in these activities are, moreover, involved in a variety of services to the local community including advocacy for the homeless; volunteering at the local House of Mercy and Catholic Worker house which serve Rochester's poor; working with people in recovery; the healing arts; higher education; work with Native peoples, and interfaith involvement.

Hopefully, the Rochester experience can encourage other units of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood to undertake similar initiatives that are responsive to the signs of the times and assist people to live a "Gaspar option" faithful to the charism of our Founder.



St. Anne Garden; Rochester Mission House



Scenes from the Rochester Mission House

Committee Reports

Report of the ad hoc Statutes Revision Committee

The committee, consisting of Frs. John, Phil and Gary met at the Niagara mission house on August 25. The items taken up were Provincial Statutes, Section I, Titles I-III. The following recommendations and/or suggestions for further discussion among members of the Province were offered:

PS 4a: This statute engendered considerable discussion. The Normative Texts only speak of missionaries living in assigned “residences.” This statute speaks of Mission Houses and accords the Provincial Assembly the authority to designate, establish, or suppress them, while leaving it to the Provincial Director with consent of the Council to do the same to residences. The following questions arise for further discussion especially in light of the recent symposium on community:

What exactly is the difference between a residence and a mission house?

Is a place a residence simply because a missionary or missionaries reside there?

What about a residence which functions *de facto* as a mission house but lacks that designation officially?

Can mission houses be distinguished such that some come under the authority of the Assembly and others under the authority of the Provincial and Council to designate, establish or suppress?

PS4b and 4c: Delete

PS5: This is a statute that has not been followed with respect to the Niagara mission house, despite its official designation, and has with respect to the Rochester house despite being unofficial – the endowment having been built up from the income of those who live(d) there.

PS6: Recommended to be moved to Title IV.

PS8: Clarify the retreat is held “every other year.”

PS10: Recommend, in addition to November, that the suffragia be applied “especially during provincial gatherings.”

PS11-14c: Should this entire section be transferred to Title III, Norms and Guidelines?

PS11: Is further clarification about what constitutes “ministry” needed, e.g. “assigned” ministry?

PS12b: What is meant by “gifts?”

PS14a: Mention “unless such funds are designated for the endowment of a mission house” with permission of the Provincial Director.”

PS14b: Reverse “in July and January” to “in January and July.”

PS20: Wording change: “the spirit and charism of our Founder Saint Gaspar, his successors, and our own predecessors.” The last sentence seems to be a violation of the Normative Texts.

PS21: Second sentence is redundant in light of PS4.

PS24: Change: “The same person may not hold both offices.”

PS27: Omit [and Studies as].

PS29: Does St. Gaspar’s Burse in fact exist?

PS31: Is this not already covered in the Normative Texts?

Formation and Vocations Committee

The Vocation/Formation committee met on Wednesday, September 13 at 2pm. The meeting was held through Skype. All the members were present except Fr. Michael who is on vacation and Fr. Mario who is a member ex officio. A schedule for upcoming meetings had been prepared by the Director of Formation and sent by email to all the members of the committee. On the agenda for this meeting was a report from the Vocation Director on two new candidates and three prospective candidates; a report from the Director of Formation on the Merlini Study Centre and the two new candidates and finally, a discussion about revised vocation and formation programs.

The Vocation Director emphasized the importance of prior discernment before candidates formally enter the program. This included a discussion about the possibility of the Niagara house becoming a house of discernment. This is one item to be considered by the committee studying the viability of the Niagara house. Of the three prospective candidates two have completed their application and are awaiting an answer from the government about student visa status and the third is, hopefully, someone who would be in a discernment program.

The Formation Director informed everyone about life in the formation house. Fr. Brendan left the house at the end of August and has moved to St. Roch’s. Fr. Mario is still waiting to move to St. Charles. Fr. Peter is still part of this community even though he is not involved in formation. He then shared the basic schedule for the formation house which will be implemented around academic schedules. Community life will be enriched when the two new candidates, Ronaldo and Keyvin, arrive.

Those presently living at Merlini include Gerardo since May 1th. He will begin his three years of special formation on October 21st. Jerome, a Tanzanian, moved in on September 1th. Both have started school with the program of St. Augustine's Seminary being the best fit and where both candidates have studied previously. Most courses are offered in the morning and the program is more complete, pastoral and focused on the priesthood than what is available through St. Michael's. Jerome is going to continue in his second year of theology while Gerardo is going to take some refresher courses and enter the third year of theology.

At the next meeting, the work of updating the vocation and formation programs will commence. Members of the province will be kept abreast of any proposed changes.



"Do you think of yourself as a spiritual person?"