

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD FAMILY



"The blood shall be a sign for you. (Exodus 12:13)

MONTH OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD



The Precious Blood Family is published three times a year by the Congregation of Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Atlantic Province.

EDITOR

Fr. John Colacino, C.P.P.S.

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Stephen Imburgia

To submit questions, articles, story ideas, news and suggestions, send email to cppspublications@gmail.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial By Fr. John Colacino, C.P.P.S.....	3
Synodality and the Spirituality of the Precious Blood By Jeffrey Kirch	4-6
From the Universal to the Particular: Implementing Synodality beyond the Synod of Bishops By Peter Santandreu.....	7-9
Voice from Tradition By Catherine of Siena.....	10-11
Caress By Antonio Selvaggi	12-13
Synodality and the Parish By Sam D'Angelo	14-16
Practicing Synodality By Maureen Lahiff.....	16-18
Journeying Together By Antonia Mary Longo	19-21
Prayers for a Synod Roman Missal.....	22

EDITORIAL

In this penultimate issue of *The Precious Blood Family* the focus is on a word that has entered the Catholic vocabulary thanks to the efforts of Pope Francis, namely, "synodality." While the noun "synod" might be familiar to many as the periodic gathering of a diocesan church to discuss matters of importance and to enact policy, or as the "Holy Synods" in the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Churches — bishops charged with various facets of governance —or, finally, as the "Synod of Bishops" inaugurated after the Second Vatican Council by Pope Paul VI that meets normally every three years with appointed representatives from episcopal conferences and curial offices to discuss topics of importance to the universal Church decided on by the Pope. These synods have at times issued "messages to the People of God" summarizing their deliberations which are then followed some time later by an apostolic exhortation by the Pope who gives his own teaching on the Synod's work.

It is this last form of "synod" that interests us here. Beginning with a first installment held last October with a follow-up session scheduled for this coming October, other forms of the word have enriched the meanings of "synod," i.e., "synodal" and "synodality." The first sign of what these words might mean was the unprecedented prior consultations of the faithful throughout the global church at local and national levels on matters of concern to the Catholic world. The second sign was the equally unprecedented inclusion of participants other than bishops — men and women — with voting rights. And the third sign was the conduct of the meetings held in small groups with a mix of people at round tables for the purpose of promoting dialogue and open discussion at times on "hot-button issues."

This innovative "Synod on Synodality" in many ways is a fruit of the Second Vatican Council's renewed vision of the Church and the relations among the hierarchy, religious, and laity, hence its theme for the second session "for a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission"

What will come of it? Time will tell — perhaps too much time. In the meantime, a variety of voices has contributed to this issue with their own thoughts and hopes. For those interested in still more may consult the Synod's official website at:

<https://www.synod.va/en.html>

Fr. John Colacino, C.P.P.S.

Synodality and the Spirituality of the Precious Blood

Jeffrey Kirch C.PP.S.

On October 17, 2015, in an address commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis offered these words, “The path of synodality is the path that God expects of his Church in the third millennium.” Because the topic of synodality is central to the thought of Pope Francis and in many ways the direction in which he is leading the Church, we need to reflect on how we understand synodality and discover in Precious Blood spirituality how synodality is manifested. Within this brief essay I will explore the theological concept of synodality, examining its roots and highlighting three key elements. I will then offer some thoughts on how our spirituality, especially our understanding of covenant, gives us particular insights into synodality. I will conclude with consideration of how both synodality and covenant lead us to mission.

Obviously, Pope Francis did not invent the term synodality. In the resources published by the Holy See, a synod is defined as “a gathering of the faithful in order to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church and asking her to be and to do.” The history of synods begins in the Old Testament and carries through the New Testament and all the way to the present day. While a history of synodality is beyond the scope of this essay, it is important to highlight the most significant development of the concept of synodality at the Second Vatican Council.

Francis’s ecclesiology is grounded in an understanding of the Church as the People of God. Chapter 2 of *Lumen gentium* captures the essence of his ecclesiology. The People of God encompasses the totality of the Church: laity,

religious, priests, and bishops. Everyone is bonded together as the People of God. This bond requires that all voices are heard. Pope Francis writes that a synodal church, “is a Church that listens, with the understanding that listening ‘is more than hearing.’ It is reciprocal listening in which everyone has something to learn.” Rafael Luciani offers a cogent summary of Francis’ thought. He writes in *Synodality: A New Way of Proceeding in the Church*:

In a synodal Church, we are asked not only to walk together – a simplistic way to understand synodality –but rather, and above all, it highlights the relations and the communicative dynamics happening while walking together. It involves the dynamic of praying, meeting, and working together, but also of discerning, and making, and taking decisions together. It is a new ecclesial culture of taking advice and building consensus. By doing so, we can overcome the pyramidal and clericalist model of a Church that teaches and another one that learns and follows. A synodal model involves the entire ecclesial community to seek new ways of proceeding as one people of God... (2-3).

Two important traits mark our understanding of People of God and synodality: totality and co-responsibility. A shift in ecclesiology took place at the Second Vatican Council. The Council Fathers, as outlined in *Lumen gentium*, retrieved the ancient understanding of the Church as encompassing everyone. The Church was not just the hierarchy. Each baptized person was part of the People of God. Within this totality, due to their baptismal call, each person also is co-responsible for building the reign of God.

There is a call to mission. Pope Francis has not convoked the Synod of Bishops to simply discuss the concept of synodality. Instead, he has called the whole Church, the People of God, to a life of conversion so that the Church's synodal nature becomes more manifest. The official title of the synod is "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission." Each of these themes flow from Francis' understanding of the People of God. At its simplest, synodality refers to walking together. It means being in communion with one another. Though the body of Christ is diverse, with many members, we are all in communion with each other.

That communion extends, to various degrees, outside of the visible Catholic Church to our fellow Christians in other churches and ecclesial communities. A synodal Church recognizes the relationships that bind us together. We truly live as the People of God embracing the totality of everyone in the Church. The second theme from the title of the synod is participation. A synodal Church welcomes the participation of all in the life of the Church. Through our baptism we have each been gifted by God and empowered to help build the reign of God. We do this in a multitude of ways.

Through our baptism we have a right to participate in the Church. Luciani writes, "The essential qualification is the baptism that makes us all co-responsible members with equal dignity in the mission" (53). It is important to note that in a synodal Church we not only have a right, but we are responsible for our part of the mission of the Church. The final theme flows naturally from the first two. Communion and participation must lead to mission. The goal of the synodal Church is not to create an unblemished, spotless Church. The goal is not to somehow preserve a faithful remnant from the outside world. Instead, a synodal Church is always directed outward in mission. This is not a new idea for Francis. Prior to his election as bishop of Rome, he was calling on the Church to go to the peripheries. In *Evangelii gaudium* he calls for a permanent state of mission (EG 25).

We can see that the theological concept of synodality stretches back to biblical times and

moves forward through history. The retrieval of the understanding of the Church as the People of God at the Second Vatican Council offers a fruitful avenue to explore what it means to be a synodal Church marked by communion, participation, and mission.

So we ask ourselves, during this time of the Synod on Synodality, what could [Precious Blood spirituality] contribute to the wider Church in order for us to become more synodal? Within this section I will highlight certain elements of our spirituality and draw connections to synodality.

Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S., identified three biblical images that speak to our spirituality: Cross, Cup, and Covenant. At a formation conference in 2003 Schreiter put forth that of the three images, covenant is the fundamental symbol of Precious Blood spirituality. It is covenant that grounds our understanding of the Cross and the Cup. The covenant between God and God's people was sealed with the blood.

The blood of the Cross achieved our redemption, and the cup is the cup of the new covenant. In addition to being the fundamental image of our spirituality, the covenant also offers a particular Precious Blood perspective on synodality. Three facets of Covenant stand out for our understanding of synodality. First, covenant is how God interacts with the world and in doing so transforms us. Each manifestation of the covenant in scripture describes how God enters into our lives and transforms us. Schreiter notes that Noah and his children are given new life, Abraham is promised many descendants, and the Hebrews, victims of slavery, will become a free people. In each instance, through the covenant they become a new people. This is most clearly seen in the covenant with the Hebrew people where once they were "no people" and have now become God's special people. That relationship however also means that they are responsible for seeing that they live their lives in accordance with God's will.

Secondly, a covenant is not a civil contract between God and humanity with delineated rights and responsibilities. Instead, covenant is about belonging to God. It is deeper than

a contract. Belonging to God opens us up to becoming part of something and someone greater than ourselves as individuals. Belonging to God is how we become truly children of God. As children of God, we are not only individuals, but are intimately bound together with God and all God's people. The third point that Schreiter makes is that covenants are future orientated. The past is the past. Now, as covenanted children of God our future is opened up before us. Schreiter writes, "But more than any other covenant, the one offered us by Jesus in his own blood holds up the vision of the coming Reign of God, where there will be no hunger or thirst, and every tear will be wiped away. Covenants have a vision, then, of what the world really looks like when God draws near" (*C.P.P.S. Heritage II, 311*).

With this brief look at covenant, what does this mean for our understanding of synodality? When we looked at the roots of synodality in the notion of the People of God, we stressed the importance of the total nature of the People of God. A synodal Church involves the whole community. Those at the center and those on the peripheries. The whole community is called into participation and communion. No one is left out. The Church is not divided into a teaching Church and a listening Church. Instead, on the synodal path we all walk together, discern the call of the Spirit together.

A synodal Church is also characterized by a deep commitment to communion. Because of the bonds we share by baptism, we are deeply committed to one another. God did not abandon the Israelites in the desert during their forty-year sojourn. We are called to stand with those on the margins. We are committed to staying connected with those on the peripheries. We are committed to responding to the cry of the blood in all of its voices. Each member of the synodal Church is connected as brothers and sisters. We are in solidarity with each other. Our understandings of the synodal nature of the Church and covenant both lead to mission. The synodal Church journeys a path of conversion and reform. We discern together where the Holy Spirit is calling

us and this discernment means that we are always being called to renewal. Renewal of structures, institutions, rules, but most especially renewal of hearts.

Our Precious Blood spirituality, especially the image of covenant, compels us to ensure that no one is excluded from the table. We have a deep bond with each other that necessitates respect for one another. Synodality and covenant also prods us to realize our nature as missionary disciples. Francis writes, "In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples. All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization" (EG 120).

As the Church journeys on the synodal path it is important that we not lose sight of the goal. This process is not about structures and offices. Instead, it is about helping us, the Church, to hear the Holy Spirit from each other, from the poor and marginalized, and from the peripheries. The process is about the Church continually being converted to Christ and the reign of God. Together we are each called to take responsibility for our mission of responding to the cry of the blood.

Fr. Jeffrey Kirch C.P.P.S. is the Provincial Director of the United States Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. This article is adapted from one that appeared in The Cup of the New Covenant, a publication of the C.P.P.S. General Curia.



Implementing Synodality beyond the Synod of Bishops

Peter Santandreu

The Synod on Synodality is about to reach its conclusion. While some have hopes that this expression of episcopal collegiality will result in a radically different approach to contentious issues in the life of the Church (mostly related to sexual morality), others are anxious to get to the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation so that they can promptly ignore it and carry on with their lives as if nothing happened. Between these extremes I am hopeful that the post-synodal world will have taken something away from this time of preparation and discussion. I doubt that anyone will be "singing a new church into being" because of any summary document, but there will never again be a contemporary Church that has not had the opportunity to be confronted with Pope Francis' invitation to be more synodal.

The Synod of Bishops, as an instrument of consultation in the Church, was sort of a surprise gift announced in the waning months of Vatican II by Pope St. Paul VI on 15 September 1965. Pope Paul announced to the council fathers gathered in Rome that he was establishing the Synod of Bishops as a means to keep the collegial spirit of the Second Vatican Council going. It came as a surprise to many in the assembly since there was almost no public discussion on how their desire to preserve such a reality would be implemented. So, without a vote or even broad consultation, Paul VI correctly discerned that the Synod of Bishops would serve the post-conciliar Church as a vehicle to maintain in a focused, occasional, way the unity of the college of bishops united with its head.

The way I look at the current Synod of Bishops is similar to my approach to everything in the life of the Church. It is entirely colored by the rose-tinted lenses of the venerable 1983 Code of Canon Law — the last document of the Second Vatican Council. The Code, which seems to be cursed with perpetual underutilization, already has in mind a Church based in consultation and collaboration among the Christian faithful. It is, by the way, in this mode that I propose we understand this concept of "synodality."

The canons on the Synod of Bishops appear in the Code right after those on the College of Bishops (which includes ecumenical councils) and right before those on the College of Cardinals. This establishes the Synod as a primary means for the Pope to consult with a representative group of his brother bishops on matters related to discipline, faith and morals, and "questions pertaining to the activity of the Church in the world" (c. 342). It is this last point that I see the Synod of Synodality most clearly addressing.

"Synodality" as a concept is just that, a concept. It is more a mode of being and less an actual issue among issues. As a concept, synodality has been experienced early on in this process. During the listening phase, when dioceses throughout the world were asked to assemble a report on the issues that are most pressing for their particular churches, it was interesting to see how distinct regions focused on vastly different concerns. Whereas individuals in Germany found themselves hung up on women's ordination, the faithful in Nigeria were most concerned with being able to go to church on Sunday without fear of being the victims of terrorist attacks. We live in vastly different worlds

on this planet earth. Ultimately, the content of these sessions is not as important as the form it reveals. Whatever the specific issues a particular region or church find it necessary to discuss, the mode of discussion is what is highlighted by the focus of the current synod. So this is not a synod on a given topic such as youth, or the family, or even the Church in the modern world. It is a synod on what it means to be a Church that listens to its membership in search of the truth in an effort to discern the best way forward given the reality of the contemporary world. Is this the ultimate exercise in navel gazing? I don't think so. Is this just a big "meeting of meetings?" Maybe...but that's not a bad thing.

But once the Synod of Synodality is concluded, what's next? Luckily, the blessed Code of Canon Law — one of the great fruits of the Second Vatican Council — provides some possible answers dealing with the active participation of all the Christian faithful in the life of the Church. To take just two examples from the Code, one can look at the requirement for consultation when the diocesan bishop wishes to perform some acts of extraordinary administration (cc. 500 §2, 515 §2, 1277, 1376 §1, 2°), and the right of the Christian faithful "to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires" (c. 212 §2). These individual requirements of law are worthy of further study, though the Synod on Synodality seems to be calling us to a broader change in attitude rather than a closer following of specific norms.

In addition to this, between canons 460 and 468, the Code lays out the basic form of the Diocesan Synod. Prior to the 1983 Code, this was a recurring legislative session that would set rules for the behavior of priests, when church bells could ring, and how much a missa cantata offering was as opposed to a simple low Mass! In the current Code, the Diocesan Synod "is to be celebrated in individual particular churches when circumstances suggest it in the judgement of the diocesan bishop" (c. 461 §1). The post-conciliar diocesan synod is a mirror of the Synod of Bishops for the universal church. Here, specific faithful within a diocese who have particular expertise are called together to discuss a current issue with the aim of assisting the bishop with his ministry of governance. This is a way for a diocese to tap its local talent and give the bishop a chance to hear what the faithful entrusted to his care might have to contribute. If it is the goal of synodality to get the Church more accustomed to broad consultation, look no further than Chapter I of Title III of Book II of the 1983 Code.

If Pope Francis wants to give the universal Church a gift in the spirit of Paul VI, he might consider mandating that every particular church celebrate a diocesan synod every five to ten years. The rediscovery of this canonical gem is one way the Church can get more practice in the mode of "synodality." With such a canonical mandate being taken seriously, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation would not be just another dead letter but would equip dioceses throughout the world with the tools to listen to the qualified voices in their midst. As the age old *regula iuris* states, "That which touches all should be approved by all."

In my mind, when there is a difficult issue pressing a certain diocese or region, it would be beneficial to have broad input from those who will be affected by final decisions. The general norm on issuing decrees further illustrates this point. Canon 50 states, “Before issuing a singular decree, an authority is to seek out the necessary information and proofs and, insofar as possible, to hear those whose rights can be injured.” The diocesan synod offers such a path forward. It could be, if taken advantage of, a true walking together, which, after all, is the meaning of the word “synod.”

Given the pronouncement on papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council, it was doubtful that there would ever be another ecumenical council. In 1959, however, Pope

St. John XXIII called for the Second Vatican Council to be convoked. Now almost six decades from the Council's conclusion, the prospect of another ecumenical council once again seems doubtful. Some might think today, as before, that the time of ecumenical councils is past, that we no longer need to gather the bishops of the world to determine answers to difficult questions of discipline or dogma. If that is true, it's too bad. The day may indeed come when another full-scale ecumenical council is warranted but, for now at least, we have the Synod of Bishops to carry on the work of consultation at the highest level of ecclesiastical governance along with diocesan synods at the level of the local Church.

Fr. Peter Santandreu is a priest of the Diocese of Buffalo where he serves as Vice-chancellor.



Voice from Tradition

Caterina di Jacopo di Benincasa

Letter to Nicholas of Osimo

In the Name of Jesus Christ crucified and of sweet Mary:

Dearest and most reverend father in Christ sweet Jesus: I Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write to you in His precious Blood: with desire to see you a firm pillar, that shall never move, except in God; never avoiding or refusing the toils and labors laid on you in the mystical body of Holy Church, the sweet Bride of Christ-- neither for the ingratitude and ignorance you found among those who feed in that garden, nor from the weariness that might afflict us from seeing the affairs of the Church get into a disorderly state.

I recall, dearest father, a servant of God to whom it was shown how pleasing this service is to Him; I tell this that you may be encouraged to bear labors for Holy Church. This servant of God, as I understood, having one time among others an intense desire to shed her blood and her life and annihilate her very consciousness for Holy Church, the Bride of Christ, lifted the eye of her mind to know that she had no being in herself, and to know the goodness of God toward her --that is, to see how God through love had given her being and all gifts and graces that follow from being. So, seeing and tasting such love and such depths of mercy, she saw not how she could respond to God except by love. But because she could be of no use to Him, she could not show her love; therefore she gave herself to considering whether she found anyone to love through Him, by whom she might show love.

So she saw that God loved supremely His rational creatures, and she found the same love to all that was given to herself, for all are loved of God. This was the means she found (which

showed whether she loved God or not) by which she could be of use. So then she rose ardently, full of charity to her neighbors, and conceived such love for their salvation that she would willingly have given her life for it. So the service which she could not render to God she desired to render to her neighbor. And when she had realized that it befitted her to respond by means of her neighbor, and thus to render Him love for love--as God by means of the Word, His Son, has shown us love and mercy--so, seeing that by means of desire for the salvation of souls, giving honor to God and labour to one's neighbor, God was well pleased — she looked then to see in what garden and upon what table the neighbor might be enjoyed.

Then Our Saviour showed her, saying: "Dearest daughter, it befits thee to eat in the garden of my Bride, upon the table of the most holy Cross, giving thy suffering, and crucified desire, and vigils and prayers, and every activity that thou canst, without negligence. Know that thou canst not have desire for the salvation of souls without having it for Holy Church; for she is the universal body of all creatures who share the light of holy faith, who can have no life if they are not obedient to My Bride.

This is the common hunger and desire of that whole body. But now I say and will that thou grow yet more in hunger and desire, and hold thee ready to lay down thy life, if need be, in especial, in the mystical body of Holy Church, for the reform of My Bride. For when she is reformed, the profit of the whole world will follow. How? Because through darkness, and ignorance, and self-love, and impurities, and swollen pride, darkness and death are born in

the souls of her subjects. So I summon thee and my other servants to labour in desire, in vigils, and prayer, and every other work, according to the skill which I give you; for I tell thee that the labour and service offered her are so pleasing to me, that not only they shall be rewarded in My servants who have a sincere and holy intention, but also in the servants of the world, who often serve her through self-love, though also many a time through reverence for Holy Church. Wherefore I tell thee that there is no one who serves her reverently--so good I hold this service-- who shall not be rewarded; and I tell thee that such shall not see eternal death. So, likewise, in those who wrong and serve ill and irreverently My Bride, I shall not let that wrong go unpunished, by one way or another."

Then, as she saw such greatness and generosity in the goodness of God, and perceived what ought to be done to please Him more, the flame of desire so increased that had it been possible for her to give her life for Holy Church a thousand times a day, and from now till the final judgment day, it seemed to her that it would be less than a drop of wine in the sea. And so it really is.

I wish you, then, and summon you, to labour for her as you have always done; yea, you are a

pillar, who have placed yourself to support and help this Bride. So you ought to be, as I said--so that neither tribulation nor consolation should ever stir you. Nor because many contrary winds are blowing to hinder those who walk in the way of truth, ought we for any reason to look back. Therefore I said that I desired to see you a firm pillar. Up, then, dearest and sweetest father: because it is our hour to give for that Bride honor to God and labour to her. I beg you, by the love of Christ crucified, to pray the holy father that he adopt zealously, without negligence, every remedy which can be found consistent to his conscience for the reform of Holy Church and peace to this great war which is damning so many souls, since for all negligence and lukewarmness God will rebuke Him most severely, and will demand the souls who through this are perishing. Commend me to him; and I ask him humbly for his benediction. I say no more. Remain in the holy and sweet grace of God. Sweet Jesus, Jesus Love.

St. Catherine of Siena (+1380) was a Dominican tertiary, mystic, church reformer, peacemaker, author of The Dialogue and innumerable letters of spiritual direction. She was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1970 by Pope St. Paul VI.



CARESS†

[Soldiers rummaging about at the Foot of the Cross and casting lots.]

Soldier #1: Who does he say *he* is?
Soldier #2: *I am* not sure.
Soldier #3: *Is* he dead?
Soldier #4: Let's find out – pass me my spear.

...and so,
nothing remained the same:
not sin, not death, not life, not nature, not innocence,
not flesh, not water, not blood, not thirst,
not *us*, and not the Victim.
All from All,
His hour of surrender had come.
If only *these* shoulders of stone
could have been a footrest worthy enough for the
Lord of lords and King of kings –
so heavy the pale silvery shame borne by our Redeemer.

He, *Our Father...in heaven*, Is,
written on the Body of Jesus
with the Blood of Christ,
inked, by the instrument
of the Lord's Cross.
The *divinum Mysterium* is etched
onto Jesus' lacerated body like that of an unraveled
scroll, tattered and torn – inscribed on both sides,
revealing the New and Eternal Covenant
from the evergreen growth
of the *Lignum Vitae*.
The Wood of Life
is the King's Key,
like *Breath*, it releases
the seized human heart
to a normal rhythm
of grateful praise.
Turn, then, the tumbler in our hearts, O Lord,
and unlock the troubles of our thoughts.
Disengage the stubbornness of our will
and unlatch Heaven's Gate profound.
Illuminate our souls with Your Face, O Father,
and cleans our bodies from impurity...
...hallowed be thy name.

The Wood of the Cross makes known the Grain of Life.
This Grain, vivid in virtue,
forms the rings of our pilgrimage
in the life of Christ Jesus,
the son of Yosef and Miryam.
These rings ascend and descend
from within and without –
Thy kingdom come;

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
As water refracts light in the prism of the Divine Heart,
so we, by rebirth, transcend our mortality
in metaphysical harmony with the One
Who, by celestial illumination of the Spirit,
ascends into the Heavenly Jerusalem.
She, Wisdom, whose wings are wind and might,
like an eagle soaring over flesh and water –
baptizing by sacrament and grace –
reveals the *Sacrosanctum*
with Her precious droplets of gentle light.
She *moves*...and we *see*...

Jesus' outstretched limbs...
Christ assumes Cross –
Cross conforms Christ –
Creator and Creation
Caress each other
in a spiraling
Matrix of Serenity –
offering us a supreme wine and
...our daily bread for all.
Like an ocean in a cup,
God is in our hands.
His hands and feet painstakingly fastened
by our inveigled hearts that formed the pale silver thorns
of a fragmented Eden; while our beguiled dreams trespassed
over the Bridegroom's garments like a blemished kiss –
temptation bites – leaving us in perilous debt
of *Denarius Shame*.

...and so,
what love *is* that you seek
to draw from deep in the Wound of Charity?
To be born of Your seed, O Lord,
From the faith and hope You give us –
The serenity of Your Cross –
The caress of Your friendship –
The peace You leave us –
Your embrace –
Your mercy –
Your sacrifice –
Your innocence...
We glorify You –
We adore You –
We thank You –
We praise You –
We call upon You...
Friend

Be-friend not Golgotha
Which had rendered the Lamb's garments foul.
So place your bets wisely

IESUS NAZARENUS REX IUDAEORUM

when you roll the dice of the wooden cross
over the fabric of your immortal souls,
should the deuce take all,
and say:

...forgive us our debts,

as we also forgive our debtors.

For the skulls of hypocrites are plentiful on the Hill,
but only the righteous shall bathe
in the River Blood –

their bodies purified and their garments made white
by the Lamb's ambient Light.

O flame of loves' most Sacred Heart of the Most High,
aglow with the embers of Your mercy,
You emit Your Heat...and bow Your head.

Lignum Vitae...

Tree of Life. Love for Life.

Your roots run deep with our pious petitions
in Paschal Mystery upward reaching....

Cross embracing, Body caressing,

Fruit of the vine made manifest in

Communion with the most Blessed Trinity.

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,

Begotten Word of the Eternal Father made Flesh.

Our Lord of Hosts, the Holy One, our Luminous King –

we take refuge in the portico of Your Wound,

O most beautiful gateway through the Body of Christ.

Hail Holy Spirit, chism seal, the Lord, the Giver of Life –

She whose tongue of fire proceeds to light the night sky

in the darkest depths of our restless hearts. Give way

with the brush strokes of Your mighty wings and *ignite*

these gifts we offer in the mystery of bread and wine...

So that they may become...

Like the dewfall...

HOLY

...and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Armor us with the Victory of Your Cross, O Lord,

so that by partaking in the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation

we may draw from the wellspring

of Eternal Life. And with Your last breath

set us free with the kisses of Your wounds, O Lord,

recreating in us Your Sacrament of Love.

You invite us to the Last Supper in the Upper Room –

Your Deliverance by Divine Providence.

We, *be-hold* the Lamb of God,

You, *the Alpha and the Omega,*

in concordance with the benevolent will of *our* Father,

we dare to say:

Corpus et Sanguis Christi.

Amen. Alleluja.

Antonio Selvaggi resides in Toronto, Ontario.

Synodality and the Parish

Sam D'Angelo C.PP.S.

When Pope Francis commemorated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Synod of Bishops on October 17, 2015, he asserted: “A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening ‘is more than simply hearing’. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the ‘Spirit of truth’ (Jn 14:17), in order to know what he ‘says to the Churches’ (Rev 2:7).” (*Preparatory Document*)

This listening process, when applied to parish ministry, presupposes that the pastoral team is willing to acknowledge that all people in the parish have something that they can contribute to the building up of the Body of Christ, and that all people are being invited to grow and to be affected by the other members of their parish community — even by those who are not a part of it, but with whom we may come into contact.

It presupposes as well that the pastoral team acknowledges that all parishioners can collectively discern the needs of the people in the area, and that the pastoral team not dictate or unilaterally decide what those needs are independent of the parish community and the local diocesan church leadership. These presuppositions also mean that, if a pastor and his team are not supportive of a synodal process in their parish, the church itself may not find itself relevant to the next generation.

As I write this, I’m reminded of my canon law class at Regis College where the Jesuit professor began the class by citing Canon 204 as the basis for all that he would have to say about the Code

in the twelve week course: *Christ’s faithful are those who, since they are incorporated into Christ through baptism, are constituted the people of God. For this reason, they participate, in their own way, in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They are called, each according to his or her particular condition, to exercise the mission which God entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world. In support of this, Canon 529 #2 further states, The parish priest is to recognize and promote the specific role which the lay members of Christ’s faithful have in the mission of the church.....and cooperate with his proper Bishop and with the presbyterium of the diocese.*

Fulfilling this threefold mission of Jesus given to all the baptized and not exclusively to the ordained, requires a lot of active listening from all the People of God to the Holy Spirit! It requires that we refrain from judging one another and from being closed-minded when new ideas are brought forth. It entails a deep respect for the various past histories which we all bring to the common table and also, to the hurts that may have been inflicted on us by church members or by others in the past. Such an active listening requires a commitment to patience and to the realization that we’re on God’s timetable and not our own when actionable items can be brought forward. It requires a constant commitment to prayer to the Holy Spirit as well to help guide us to discern God’s will. It also requires an honest look at the history of the worldwide and local church and for ways it may have been complicit in harming others or of institutionalizing hurtful attitudes or behaviors. To accomplish all of this in a parish setting, it’s useful to gather people

into small groups at different times and different places and to remain in these groupings for some duration, so that trust is gradually built up and relationships are strengthened in the process.

Bishop Damphousse, who served in the Diocese of Sault Ste Marie for a few years, once remarked that the role of a pastor is not always to be at the head, leading the flock. Sometimes, the shepherd needs to be in the middle of the flock where he allows others to lead and, sometimes, at the end of the flock, where he can see everyone ahead of him, journeying together as a pilgrim people to the Heavenly Kingdom.

In my opinion, it's this kind of shepherding which is necessary in a synodal church. Gone are the days when the pastor could make all the decisions and expect the faithful to unquestioningly comply. Gone are the days when pastors would not be challenged by the lay faithful, many of whom have advanced degrees in theology, public speaking, or in ministry. Gone are the days when others will choose to allow the pastor to independently set the agenda of the parish community and to support such an agenda financially.

In my current pastoral role at Holy Redeemer Church in Sudbury, we've taken steps to becoming a synodal parish by adopting an evangelization program called Rebuilt, which is based on a collective discernment of what each of us can do to fulfill the three-fold mission of Jesus entrusted to us. It is based on four pillars.

The first pillar is *Growing Wider* and invites us to reflect on what can we do to extend an invitation to others to join us in our worshipping community. As part of this process, those interested come together to create a profile of those who are perhaps not a part of our parish community. In Sudbury, we've called our profile, 'Minnow Lake Mike!' He/she is someone who likes to socialize at Tim Horton's, who may have children in hockey, karate, or dance, who works a lot of hours just to make ends meet, who may be a recent immigrant from another country, who may be a single parent, and someone who may have grown distant to the church over the years due to the various crises which have beset the worldwide church.

As a synodal church, we're being challenged to consider whether we're willing to meet 'Minnow Lake Mike' where he happens to be. Do we go to Tim Horton's? Do we go to the hockey arena? And if 'Minnow Lake Mike' decides to give the church a chance, are we willing to accompany him to church and listen to him? Do we have warm welcoming ministers at our entrance area to greet him? Do we sit with him during Mass? Are the Mass times we offer conducive to people with rotating work schedules or who have to depend on public transportation to and from the church? How can we offer childcare and/or children's programs during the Mass and for sacramental preparation that take into account the modern-day hectic lives of families? These are just some of the questions that require a lot of listening in order to grow wider.

The second pillar is *Growing Deeper*. This asks us to consider how we help those already in church to grow more profoundly in their own understanding of their participation in the mission of Christ. How and what kinds of programs can we offer, both online and in-person, for parishioners interested in exploring in greater depth various aspects of our faith or faith life? Can we offer multimedia presentations as part of that learning? How can we foster celebratory and social events where parishioners can get to know one another more and share their lives with one another? Have we ever asked what it is that a parishioner would like?

Focusing on the *Weekend Experience* is the third pillar. This involves making the Mass the best that's ever been celebrated every week. It involves coordinating music, liturgical art, homily themes, children's programming, bulletin and end-of-Mass announcements sea as to leave people wanting to come back next week for more, so that everyone will want to tell others the exciting things they learned and that are happening in our parish community.

Developing a Leadership Group is the fourth pillar. This group doesn't so much tell the parish what the next step is, as much as to help celebrate victories, propose an alternative for what isn't working, and to act as the cheerleaders for everyone else in the parish striving to be Christ for others.



As we become better listeners in these four areas, I believe our church will become a greater witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the next generation and will itself be transformed by that generation in its commitment to Gospel inclusivity, community, and outreach.

Fr. Sam D'Angelo C.P.P.S. is a Missionary of the Precious Blood of the Atlantic Province where he serves as Vice-provincial as well as pastor of Holy Redeemer Church in Sudbury, Ontario.

Practicing Synodality

Maureen Lahiff

Figuring out what the current synod is about, and what it is *not* about, is certainly not easy. The synthesis report “A Synodal Church on Mission” issued on 28 October 2023 at the end of the first assembly to summarize “convergences, matters for consideration, and proposals that emerged from the dialogue,” disappointed many by its silences. Those longing for structural changes in the Church may have felt further discouraged on 14 March 2024, when it was announced that Pope Francis has decided substantive issues that were at all controversial in the first assembly will be addressed by study groups later, and not at the second assembly in October 2024.

The most helpful resource I have found for understanding the implications of this synod is the collection of talks given by Timothy Radcliffe, OP at the retreat for participants held just before the October 2023 assembly. *Listening Together: Meditations on Synodality* was published in March in the US by Liturgical Press. Radcliffe, master general of the Order of Preachers from 1993 to 2001, presented six conferences for the retreat, as well as three meditations during the synod meetings. It is a short book, and engaging to read.

Did all these people gather in Rome just to listen to each other? Yes. But Radcliffe would certainly strike the work “just” from this question. Indeed, the listening was precisely the point. Radcliffe anticipates the media coverage of the synod and participants’ own doubts by saying in the first retreat reflection that “. . . we may worry whether we are achieving anything. The media will probably decide that it was a waste of time, just words” (10).

Radcliffe openly acknowledges that participants in the synod assembly came to Rome with contradictory hopes and clashing understandings of what it means for the Church to be a place where people can feel at home. He adds that, “The Synod gathered people who see the future of humanity very differently.” (134) Radcliffe’s own hope for the first assembly was that, through listening, participants would have “begun to share the same questions” (136). He counts it as important that people gathered around the small circular tables began to smile at each other (124). “We are travelling together [*hodos* + *syn* = synod, I add] even if sometimes with pain and mutual incomprehension (138).

What can we do now to incorporate the messages of this synod into our ministries and the lives of the our local faith communities, if anything? Actually, I think there is quite a lot.

Listening to experiences of people who are not “trusted messengers” that share our own perspective, people who we perceive to be different from us, provides us an opportunity to broaden our understanding. Listening holds the promise of finding points of similarity that we could not have imagined. (I owe this perspective and hope to the materials for the University of California Climate Stewards Program.) Listening to others in a respectful, safe space offers great potential to overcome polarization.

In a Precious Blood framework, we often turn to the exhortation from the Letter to the Hebrews to go outside the camp, outside the gate, to minister with people who have been pushed to the margins . What the synod makes explicit is that we are called to *listen* to those we meet there. One process for doing this are the listening circles , as practiced at the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation in Chicago and the Precious Blood Renewal Center in Kansas City.

What would leadership in a more synodal Church look like at the local level, in our parishes and schools and places we serve? I think this is the important action question. We will have different answers, depending on our concrete circumstances. But there is one thing that I think should be a central part of this vision. Those with decision-making responsibilities would listen to those whose who will be impacted by their decisions. The International Association for the Practice of Public Participation’s core values include the principles that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process and that their contributions will influence the decision. (This is another resource from the Climate Stewards Program.)

As an example, questions for a parish might include: Is there a pastoral council? How are the members discerned by the parishioners? How well do they reflect the parish community? How does the council listen to the parishioners? Small listening circles are a better way to invite people to share in depth rather than town-hall style meetings. Pastoral leaders would have to share their experiences, too, as equals.

Listening to people tell us who they are, what they care about, their joys and sorrows and challenges also echoes Vatican Council II’s *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)*. Such deep listening should be the first step in evangelization. However, it is not at all evident that the Church genuinely listens to individuals. We as a Church have a long way to go.

An example comes to mind concerning transitions in parish leadership as religious communities let go of commitments to parishes and as dioceses come to terms with shrinking financial resources and fewer diocesan priests. These have largely left parish members feeling ignored and confused. Even in cases where there are meetings, parishioners do not feel that their experience gets taken into account.

And most recently, while the synod synthesis report claims that “we need to provide an opportunity for a dialogue involving the human and social sciences, as well as philosophical and theological reflection,” it seems to me this has not been put into practice when it comes to people who experience gender identities and gender expressions that do not fit the Church’s categories. In my opinion, before making more pronouncements about what the Church thinks must be true for transgender persons, the Church needs to listen to them, especially those who have the freedom to live in ways consistent with their identity.

To conclude, however, on a brighter note, which should be of interest to the many Canadian readers of this publication, the Catholic Church in Canada — bishops, pastoral leaders and a wide range of communities and individuals — are way ahead of their American counterparts when it comes to listening to the sufferings of First Nations from settler colonialism and boarding schools. This journey of acknowledgement, reparation, and reconciliation continues, though not without bumps in the road. In 2018, Pope Francis refused to apologize for boarding school abuses when the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission asked for one even with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau going to the Vatican with the request. Then in 2022, the Pope responded positively with an apology to a delegation of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit who came to the Vatican; when he visited Canada a few

months later, Francis said "I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians against the Indigenous peoples." Finally, he rescinded the infamous "Doctrine of Discovery" in 2023. That's the kind of pope who can convene such a synod on "synodality."

In the end, sharing and listening together, rather than merely on a one-to-one basis but as a community, may well be easier for both those in positions of responsibility and those who do not feel at home in the Church. I commend the synod for its example, and invite us all to walk this path.

Maureen Lahiff has been a Precious Blood Companion for over thirty years. She is currently convener for the Alameda, California Companions group.



Journeying Together

Antonia Mary Longo ASC

In his September 18, 2021, address to the people of the Diocese of Rome before the beginning of the Synod on Synodality, Pope Francis said: “The word “synod” says it all: it means “journeying together”. How? The theme of the Synod outlines it for us: *Communion, Participation, Mission*.

In explaining these key words to the Roman Curia in his 2021 Christmas address Francis spoke regarding participation of co-responsibility, working together in ways that encourage creativity and the inclusion of all, and making space for all to have an active role in whatever project is in the works. He said communion is about our relationship with Jesus whom we need to make sure is the Center of our lives; it’s about listening to the word of God together and building relationships not only by working together but by helping one another and becoming more and more comfortable with our diversity among ourselves and in the People of God. When we work together in

cooperation and communion, we are moved to have at heart the good of the entire People of God whom we are called to serve. Francis then went on to speak of mission, the third pillar of synodality as opening our hearts to the needs of those around us and being impelled toward those on the margins, those who are poor. Francis goes so far as to say not only do the poor need us, but that we move toward them because we also need them: “We need their voice, their presence, their questions and their criticisms”.

We can see that these three pillars of the Synod are interrelated and intertwined. One leads to the other and flows out of the other. From my lived experience of our spirituality of the Precious Blood, I would say that, among other things, it is a spirituality of *communion, participation and mission* with God, others, and all of creation. As such, it is a spirituality of closeness, compassion, reconciliation, healing, and love which both draws us into the pierced heart of our Christ and leads us from that heart toward our sisters and brothers as they are, without exclusion or discrimination. It is a spirituality of adoration – of

finding God wherever God is found and adoring God there — standing with those on the margins, those in need of experiencing God's love in their bodies, minds and spirits. In our very bones we, as members of the *Precious Blood Family*, are synodal — we are people who *walk together* with God in prayer and adoration, growing daily in *communion* with each other and the People of God, fostering *participation* and inclusion as we bring the *Joy of the Gospel* to those we serve in *mission* throughout the world. How might we become even more so?

Here in Rome at the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) where I minister at the Programme for the Preparation of Formators, there is much talk about the Synod on Synodality and the synodal process. A good number of the presenters have explained, and some have incorporated into their presentations, the process of *Conversation in the Spirit* which was used during the deliberations of the Synod. I believe this process can be beneficial to us and can inform the ways in which we journey through life in our own congregations and communities as well as in our life in mission throughout the world. The process is at heart an Ignatian one and is very simple, yet very profound. There is not space here to give a detailed

explanation of these conversations as understood by Ignatius and today's Jesuits. More on this topic can be found in the July 2023 issue of *The Way* published by the British Jesuits entitled "*Spiritual Conversation*" as well as in other books referenced in that publication.

It is important, however, to note how in *Conversation in the Spirit* participants, up to three at a time speak for 3-4 minutes each followed by 3-4 minutes of silent prayer which is integral to the process. This deep listening and praying leads to discernment of the will of God as voiced by those taking part in the conversation. Underlying the conversation is the importance of regular, authentic conversations with others and with God. Thomas H. Clancy, quoted in the above-mentioned publication, invites us to reflect on the substance of our conversations with God and each other:

We can hardly hope to learn to talk to God until we rediscover how to talk to one another. Of course, that effort itself demands prayer. We should pursue conversations on both levels. God will teach us better how to listen to and talk with our friends. And our friends will teach us better how to listen to God and to open our heart to him without self-consciousness or self-seeking. ("Conversational Word of God," 50)

After the sharing, the deep listening and the prayer, there is another sharing using the same process: What am I/we hearing? Those gathered continue to hear what the Spirit is saying about the topic of the conversation or the decision to be made. The purpose of the sharing and listening is finding together what God's will is for us. This process of decision-making is clear in the "how" and can make the "what" a bit easier to understand. The process incorporates all three pillars of the synodal process: Communion fashioned through authentic, truthful sharing in an atmosphere of deep listening; Participation encouraged through inclusion around the table and acceptance without judgement of each one's truth; Mission as next steps are discerned together and become real as we move toward the peripheries, toward those who need us and whom, as Francis reminds us, we need.

Thus, we continue the journey together along with the synodal process and its three pillars. Perhaps we, the *Precious Blood Family*, are being called to be more intentional about the conversations we have and whom we invite into conversation with us. Perhaps this Synod on Synodality can give us the push we might need to be even more intentional about honoring the inherent dignity of all persons and their right to participate in decisions involving them and their lives. By engaging this process in our congregations and communities in a spirit of communion and deep listening, we just might hear the whispers of the Spirit leading us in discernment with an eye toward the mission God intends for us, as we strive to bring about "that beautiful order of things the great Son of God came to establish in his Blood." (St. Maria De Mattias)

Sr. Toni Longo is an Adorer of the Blood of Christ living in Rome, and serves as Assistant Coordinator of the International Union of Superiors General Programme for the Preparation of Formators.



OUR APOSTOLATE



C.P.P.S. MISSION PROJECTS

C.P.P.S Mission Projects is a charity founded by the congregation of Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Atlantic Province. Its mission is to spread the Good News that Christ has redeemed us all through the shedding of his Most Precious Blood, by helping those in need.

Since 1976, C.P.P.S. Mission Projects has focused working toward the uplifting of human dignity, and toward better living conditions of Tanzanians. Our missions in Africa support 2.5 million people a year. We help the people and communities we serve lift themselves and their families out of poverty. We partner with donors and the local people to develop solutions to tackle challenges facing them like poverty, lack of access to clean water and education, climate change, economic empowerment, and food security.

We are based in Dodoma-Tanzania and our approach to tackling problems is inspired by the flavor of the Gospel and the Spirituality of the Precious Blood. Our missions give priority to the poor, children, girls and women. May we always be ready to help the poor and the vulnerable. Find us at cppsmissionprojects.ngo

Prayers from the Roman Missal for a Synod or Pastoral Meeting (1993 ICEL translation)

O Lord,
ruler and guardian of your Church,
pour forth on your servants gathered in synod
the spirit of understanding, truth, and peace,
that they may strive with all their hearts
to know what is pleasing to you
and pursue it with all their strength.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever. Amen.

O God,
you guide your people with kindness,
you govern them with love.
Grant the spirit of wisdom
to those you have called as teachers and guides,
that your people may be led
to understand the truth more fully
and to please you by their growth in holiness.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever. Amen.

Be close to this assembly,
Lord God of steadfast truth.
Grant [them] patience in listening,
wisdom in speaking,

and courage to do the works of the gospel.

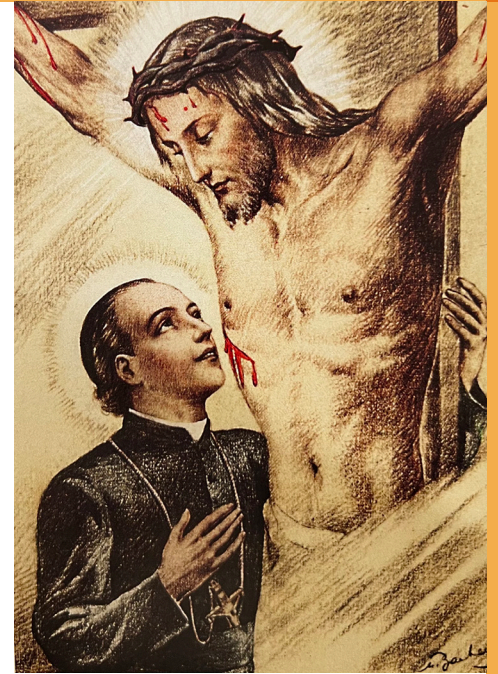
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever. Amen.

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD, ATLANTIC PROVINCE



UNIO SANGUIS CHRISTI

Founded in 1851 by the Ven. Giovanni Merlini, third Moderator General of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, and approved by Pope Pius IX, the Union serves to promote the spirituality of the Blood of Christ through a variety of activities.



THE PRECIOUS BLOOD FAMILY

We appreciate any donation to help defray the postage and printing costs of this publication. The suggested annual offering is \$25. Please make cheques payable to Unio Sanguis Christi. Tax receipts are issued in January of each year.

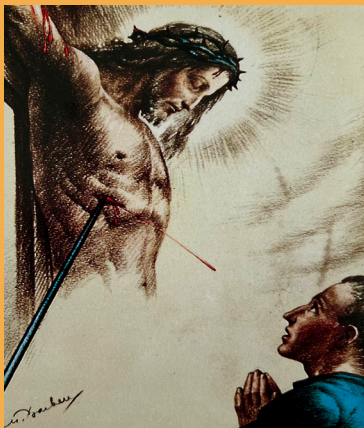
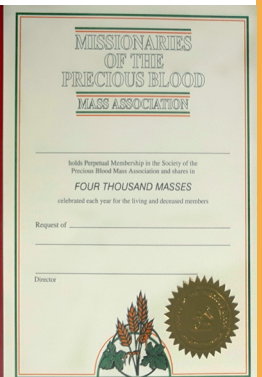
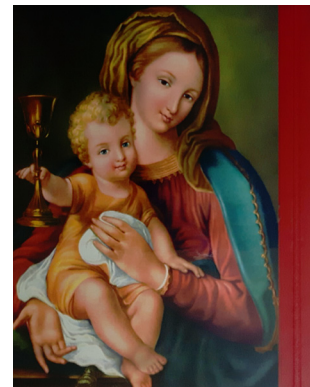
MASS ASSOCIATION

Since 1883 with the approval of Pope Leo XIII the Missionaries of the Precious Blood throughout the world have offered 4000 Masses annually for those enrolled in their Mass Association. Enrollments may be made on behalf of the living and the dead. These may be made in person or by mail at the Shrine of St. Gaspar, 540 St. Clair Ave. W., Toronto ON M6C 1A4. Requests are also accepted by telephone

at 416-653-4486 or through the Atlantic Province website. The suggested offering is \$25.00 plus \$4.00 postage if the certificate is mailed.

You may also access the website - preciousbloodatlantic.org - click on Donations for more choices, like requesting a single Mass, a Mass Association or make a donation for spreading the spirituality of the Precious Blood

or the work of the Missionaries by completing all the required fields.

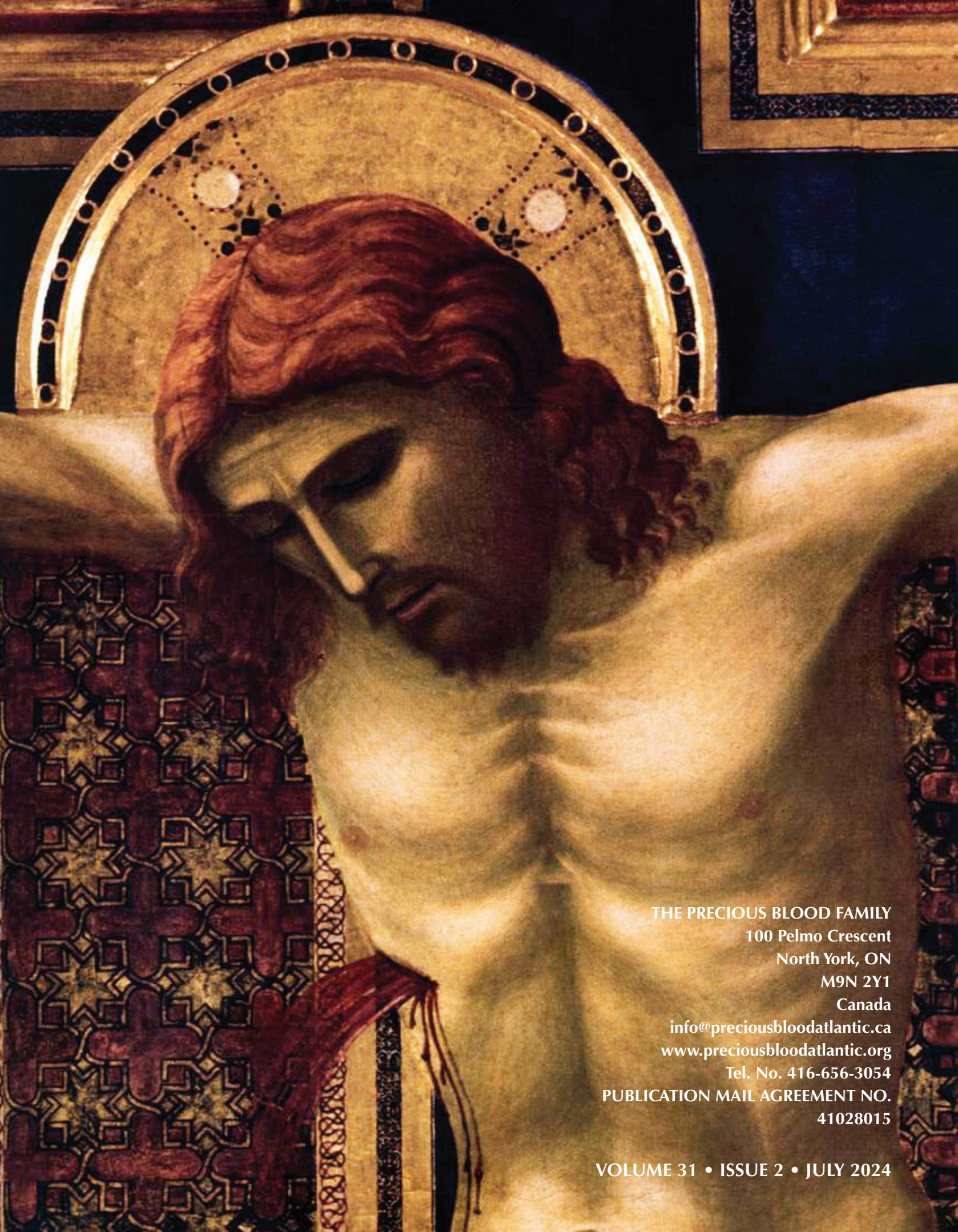


VOCATIONS

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood continue St. Gaspar's Ministry of the Word by preaching renewal and conversion through missions and retreats. We bring that love of God also to parishes, schools, hospitals, and prisons. As missionaries, we work where the Church needs us

most and where the Good News has not been heard. We walk with Jesus by sharing the joys and sufferings of the people with whom we work.

For information, contact Precious Blood Vocations at 416-829-6717 or e-mail alareyab@yahoo.ca.



THE PRECIOUS BLOOD FAMILY

100 Pelmo Crescent

North York, ON

M9N 2Y1

Canada

info@preciousbloodatlantic.ca

www.preciousbloodatlantic.org

Tel. No. 416-656-3054

PUBLICATION MAIL AGREEMENT NO.

41028015

VOLUME 31 • ISSUE 2 • JULY 2024