

## **Table of Plenty -- By: Angelo Anthony, C.PP.S.**

One of the things that you can count on when entering a Precious Blood house is the invitation to gather at the table and to be nourished by tasty food, refreshing drink and engaging dialogue. This was the experience of the Precious Blood Leadership Conference (PBLC) as we gathered for our spring meeting, April 17-20, 2008, in Reading, Pennsylvania. Sr. Eva Janning, CPS, provincial of the North American Province of the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood, hosted our meeting and shared with us the beauty and hospitality of their retreat center named Mariawald.

A friend of mine once said you can tell a lot about a group by the persons who are gathered around the table. What is so rich about the PBLC table gatherings is the mix of woman and men, partners in mission and ministry, gathered under the banner of the Precious Blood. The spirit of mutuality, partnership, honesty and respect that is found at the table of our sharing offers us an opportunity not easily found in other formal church structures. The witness of our coming together is an important aspect of our missionary life.

Sr. Joni Belford, CPPS, our Executive Director, led us through the agenda packet that had been prepared for the meeting. There were various reports given on the Precious Blood Vocation/Formation Conference and the National Precious Blood Association Conference, finance and budget reports, PBLC prayer book project and Convocation 2010 which is entitled: "Who Will Speak the Word to Rouse Them? I can, I must, I will. Will you?" (Please be sure and reserve the dates of July 26-29, 2010, in your calendars for the convocation.) We also received an update on the new PBLC website and its new address: [www.precious-blood.ca](http://www.precious-blood.ca). Our old website address was taken over by another group, so please be sure and change your address books to reflect the new address.

By its nature, the make up of the PBLC changes as new leadership is elected in the various congregations represented in the PBLC. As we know, any change in the composition of a group will affect its identity and working relationship. It's important at these times to take a pulse and evaluate who we are and where we are going as a group.

In our discussion we valued the opportunity to hear one another's stories and experiences in mission, the challenges and successes. All spoke of the value of the female/male perspective that is brought to the table of our meetings. There is the potential to be church today in a way that is different from other structures. The challenges we face are tied to the stewardship of our time and various limited resources that are available to us.

The group felt the Human Rights Initiatives that were sponsored by the PBLC several years ago were very helpful in raising our collaborative voice. The members of the PBLC expressed a desire to renew this voice and plan to discuss at our next meeting significant areas of justice that we are working on individually that could be strengthened by a shared Precious Blood voice.

Toward the close of the meeting there was an opportunity to offer some input on some activities taking place that are not sponsored by the PBLC but of interest to the group. Fr. Angelo reported on a group that continues to work on a Precious Blood Spirituality Center that will be based on the Internet. Fr. Jim shared that the Kansas City Province is moving forward with their desire to establish a Volunteer Program. Sr. Jan of the ASC community spoke of their plans to open a house of discernment as well as another program called *Sojourners* as a way of sharing their life and being in community that is non-canonical.

Along with the work of the meetings we also spent time in prayer and at play. We reflected upon an article by Ray Dlugos, CSA, entitled "Leading Through A Time of Change" and took a step back in time and enjoyed a local production of the Old Testament story of Daniel and the Lion's Den.

Having been fed in many ways at the various tables of our PBLC gathering there was a note of gratitude for the hospitality received at Mariawald and a spirit of hope for the future because of our shared Precious Blood charism and mission.