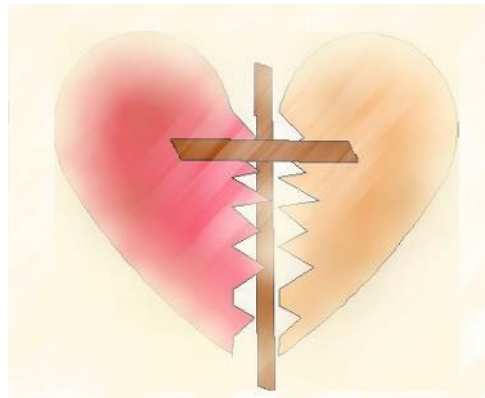


A weekly reflection by members
of the Precious Blood Community

November 27, 2024

Vicky Otto, D.Min.

"A single grateful thought toward heaven
is the most complete prayer."
Gotthold Lessing Ephraim



I have written reflections before Thanksgiving often. I always enjoy Thanksgiving more than Christmas simply because there are far fewer expectations. We will celebrate simply by gathering and enjoying each other's company tomorrow. While the intention of Thanksgiving hasn't changed, it seems different and more challenging this year.

One of the reasons for the difficulties could be what we face each year. Once the calendar turns to November, we become inundated with pictures on social media and from various retail establishments about the "perfect" holiday. Many gaze longingly, wondering if purchasing just a few suggested items might achieve the perfection displayed in the pictures. As I have grown older, I have come to realize that the gatherings I participate in have no resemblance to these pictures. The gatherings I attend often have food spilled or dishes broken. It doesn't matter, though, because the space is filled with something pictures can't capture: the spirit of joy, laughter, and love shared among those gathered.

This year, the divisions that have caused polarization may be more pronounced during our holidays. While we see pictures of the "perfect" gatherings, many of our homes, churches, and communities are broken, suffering from the wounds of polarization that have affected each of us. We all recognize that there are wounds because of these

divisions we have all encountered. Yet, it is far more challenging to identify the long road back to healing and wholeness that addresses our brokenness. Now, more than ever, the gifts we share as people connected by Precious Blood spirituality are needed.

We first need to acknowledge that we are all wounded. Tomas Halik that Christ shows us his wounds and gives us the courage not to conceal our own. As we embrace and acknowledge our wounds, we see and honestly acknowledge the woundedness of others. I don't think there is anyone who has not experienced the woundness of polarization in our world today. We have to begin on this long road by first recommitting to the gifts of our spirituality. Then, we must take the next step and share them with others. Rather than avoiding the wounds of polarization, we need to acknowledge the wounds. In recognizing them, we begin to take the first steps to reconnection, which many people desire. Perhaps we begin with the wound of loneliness. We have all experienced this; maybe this year, we can share a word or moment with someone experiencing it now. We have all experienced the wounds of polarization when we feel that we can't be our authentic selves or express ideas without being ridiculed, dismissed, or ignored. One of the gifts of our spirituality is offering space for people to be their authentic selves with no judgment or repercussions. Creating a safe space with someone who has experienced these divisions so they can share their truths is perhaps one of the greatest gifts we can share with our world today.

Whether you are traveling to be with family or community or staying home and people are gathering with you, my prayer for each of us is that a moment may come where, after acknowledging our wounds, the grace of peace and reconciliation can be found.

Vicky Otto, D. Min, is a Companion (lay associate) with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. She currently serves as the Executive Director of the Precious Blood Spirituality Institute. To learn more about the Institute, [click here](#).

This weekly reflection is made available to all who are part of our Precious Blood family. Feel free to share it with others. Would you be willing to write a reflection? If so, please contact Vicky Otto at votto@pbspiritualityinstitute.org