Mary, Woman of the New Covenant

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Mary in the Life of the C.PP.S.

Mary has always played an important role in the life of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Don Beniamino Conti has already explained the place of Our Lady of the Precious Blood—or the Madonna of the Chalice, as she is also known—in the mission preaching of St. Gaspar and the early Missionaries.

In the course of the Congregation's history, Mary has been honored under a variety of titles. We know, for example, of the importance of the title "Mary, Help of Christians" to the Venerable Giovanni Merlini. For Fr. Francis Brunner, the veneration of Mary was promoted under the titles of Mother of God and the Sorrowful Mother. Fr. Brunner set up a shrine to the Sorrowful Mother in northwest Ohio in 1850, a shrine which continues under the care of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood this day.

In recent years, other images of Mary have been created. Perhaps most notably is that of Mary, Our Lady of the Precious Blood as "*Qaloq'Lajna' Aj Uk'Tesinel*," her title among the Q'ecqchí in Guatemala. In Q'ecqchí ritual, the sacred cacao drink is served to the chief members of the community, and then to everyone, by the young women of the community. They, in turn, have received this drink from the senior women. It is a ritual which makes and seals a covenant, affirms friendship, and

celebrates life. Fr. Dario Caal of the Central American Mission has developed this image of Our Lady based on this rite. The name "*Qaloq'Aj Uk'Tesinel*" means "Our Lady who gives us to drink." In developing this image, Caal has linked the role of women giving life and sustenance to the Community with that of Mary, Our Lady of the Precious Blood.

In this presentation, I would like to explore an image of Mary, related to our spirituality, which was developed by the Adorers of the Blood of Christ (hereafter referred to as A.S.C.) in the 1970s. It is that of "Mary, Woman of the New Covenant." Mary is first invoked under this title in the A.S.C. *Constitution* in the 1970s, and again in their 1992 *Constitution.* Although relatively little has been written about this title of Mary, the A.S.C. have designed a dramatic statue and chapel to Mary under this title in their convent in Wichita, Kansas.

The development of this image of Mary exemplifies in significant ways the shift from devotion to spirituality in relation to Mary. As was noted in the discussion of a similar shift regarding the Blood of Christ, the move from devotion to spirituality was prompted in the twentieth century by renewal in biblical studies and the liturgical renewal. One of the concerns of spirituality is how we bring the resources of our tradition to bear upon interpreting situations in which we now find ourselves. Spirituality so conceived is hermeneutical, i.e., concerned with interpreooierpii.e.,

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[3]Robert Schreiter, "Covenant: Making Connections," *The Wine Cellar*, no. 5 (February, 1996), 5–12; "Spirituality of the Covenant," *Acta of the XVII General Assembly, C.PP.S.* (Carthagena: The Messenger Press, 2002), 136–151.