



the Chalice

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN By Gaylen E.

Greetings and welcome to the blessings of the 2019 Lenten season! My view of and experience with Lent has changed dramatically over time. I'll bet yours has too.

When I was younger, I thought Lent was a period of sacrifice, where we gave up something that we enjoyed, like chocolate, or some sinful behavior that we liked to do, but knew was wrong, as a form of penance to God. Either way, it felt like a punishment. Today, as a recovering alcoholic/addict who strives to lead a life of holiness, I have been taught different. Today, I know that the real purpose of Lent is to draw me closer to God, through identification with His Son, Jesus Christ, and His example. And I am struck by the similarities between this Lenten process and the spiritual exercises of my AA 12-Step program, especially this month's topic, the Third Step.

*The impossible
becomes
possible.*

The daily Lenten Scripture readings, reflections, and homilies at Mass repeat a constant message: God knows us; sees us at our deepest level; and engages with us. He offers His Mercy, Love and Grace to help heal us. And in doing so, He offers us a resurrection and a new life that is free of the demons and addictions that drove us into the despair of hopelessness and helplessness. And our willingness to follow God's will, as His Son did, despite temptations, allows us to walk through the triumphant arches to freedom. His example and Grace help us to withstand temptation as well.

We are reborn, through His Grace, and in his Sacramental presence. And the impossible becomes possible. First the total abstinence of sobriety, and then the spiritual growth that teaches us that He loves and forgives us. And this love allows us to love and care for those around us, our families and friends.

In turning our will and our lives over to God, we are freed from the bondage of self, and can begin to grow in effectiveness and understanding, to follow His commandment to love our neighbors as He loves us. We become happily and usefully whole.

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President's Column, by Gaylen E. (Continued)

The message of Lent is the hope of a resurrection in our own lives, and the promise of eternal life, the greatest of all gifts.

The second half of the Serenity prayer tells us this:

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,

Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,

Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,

So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Amen.

My Little Patch of Green, by Fr. Doug McKay, Calix Chaplain

There is a story about General Ulysses Grant and his nick name: ‘Unconditional Surrender Grant’. He got the name at Fort Donelson. When Ulysses was ready to attack the enemy, the general defending the fort asked him what terms he would give him if he would surrender. Ulysses replied, “No terms other than ‘an unconditional and immediate surrender’ can be accepted....” I am pretty sure that the opposing general quickly thought about making the decision to surrender his armed forces, but then he had to act immediately upon his decision or face bad consequences.

The Third Step of the Twelve Step program is to make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understand Him*. As Catholics, we understand that the Lord calls us to surrender to Him and act immediately upon His amazing grace. Now, not later, is the time for salvation; now is the time to turn our lives and our wills over to God who cares for us with good consequences.

When speaking of the Third Step, I have often heard from recovering friends this question and answer: “If there are five frogs on a log and three decide to jump off, how many frogs are left on the log?” And the answer of course: there are still five frogs left on the log, because deciding is not yet doing. So deciding to do God’s will is not yet doing God’s will. Therefore, we must not only decide to do His will, we must do His will, without delaying.

In the Bible (**Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth**), we know His moral will. It is simply this: Keep the Commandments!

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A friend of Samuel Clements, pen-name Mark Twain, said to him, “I’m going to the Holy Land and I’m going to climb Mount Sinai, and then, my friend, I’m going to read the Ten Commandments.”

Twain responded, “Why don’t you just stay home and *keep* the commandments?”

Why don’t we all, at home or abroad, just keep the commandments? Not just the Ten Commandments but especially the new commandments and particularly the Sermon on the Mount of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Whenever I think about these stories of Grant and Twain, I can hear God say to me, especially now, “Surrender, Douglas! No more terms other than your unconditional and immediate surrender to all my commandments.” And when I do surrender on His terms there are always good and graceful consequences.

I am tempted to nick name the Almighty One: “Unconditional Surrender God.”

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My Little Patch of Green, by Fr. Doug McKay (Continued)

Once we surrender, immediately and completely, our wills and our lives over to the care of God, our souls will find peace—*for in His will I find my peace*. What we need to do, as the Bible tells us, is to *keep* the commandments and *cast all our cares on Him who cares for us*. One of my favorite scriptural passages, and there are many, is Psalm 23: *“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. In verdant pastures, he gives me repose; Besides restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul....”*

I end this article with an inspired poem that I wrote some time ago as I sat distressed within a walled-in garden on a swing built for two (seats facing one another) in the midst of Philadelphia, our chaotic city:

My Little Patch of Green

In my little patch of green,
Surrounded by a wall,
I sit in a swing made for two,
In a world of so much awe.

Outside, tires are screeching,
Lights flashing, sirens blaring,
And people screaming,
All around my little patch of green.

But inside, butterflies are fluttering
Among His sunlit flowers,
Squirrels scampering
Across His brilliant lawn,
And birds chirping
Above His glittering fountains,
All within my little patch of green.

Now as I sit in my prayer for peace,
My Good Shepherd grins,
And He swings me with Him
In my little patch of green.

- *Father Douglas McKay, O.F.S.*
Calix Chaplain

Feeding My Sheep, by Bruce G.

Through my involvement in prison ministry with our county's detention center, I was asked to speak with a group of Catholic Charities volunteers about how they can assist newly released inmates without enabling the inmate's alcohol and drug addiction issues.

These Transition Assistance Program (TAP) volunteers mentor "returning citizens," as the former inmates are called, by providing logistics help such as car rides to the probations office, the DMV, and to some form of shelter. Other logistical assistance is also provided, like a backpack with essential clothing and hygiene items, and help getting prescriptions filled.

While carrying out these corporal works of mercy, the mentors also practice compassionate listening. This compassionate listening is an extremely important element of the re-entry process, but it opens the door for caretaking, problem fixing, and enabling behaviors by the mentors.

Most TAP mentors, unfortunately, are not familiar with addiction or recovery programs and therefore are not equipped to help alcoholics and addicts (henceforth simply "addicts") work their recovery program. That has led to some challenging situations. Even when the returning citizen has had an AA sponsor or other recovery help, there have been relapses and loss of sober living arrangements.

Ultimately, this has led to the rapid burnout of the mentors, and the fact that the mentors might be unknowingly enabling the addicts. Humans are a unity of body and soul, so it is incumbent on the TAP volunteers, and on the rest of us, to address both aspects of the person when we act in the name of Christ. TAP, as currently constituted, addresses bodily needs but lacks the spiritual element found in 12-Step programs.

"Humans are a unity of body and soul, so it is incumbent ... to address both aspects ... when we act in the name of Christ."

Not knowing how to share my 12-Step experience, strength and hope with the TAP team, I turned to prayer and meditation. The answer that I received was fairly straightforward, a series of five Gospel readings that would bring grace and light to the volunteers. I presented the five readings, outlined below, at a recent meeting.

I believe that the readings will bear good fruit, provided that the volunteers do prayerfully reflect on them. The goal for the volunteers is to use these readings to better understand the personal relationship with Jesus Christ that **they** themselves must have in order to effectively ministering to addicts without enabling insobriety.

Using their New American Bible titles, the five Gospel readings were:

- The Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac (Mk 5:1-10, 15, 18-20)
- Judging Others (Mt 7:1-5)
- Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38-42)
- The Wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1-10)
- The Commissioning of the Twelve (Mt 10:5-8)

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Feeding My Sheep, by Bruce G. (Continued)

The first reading captures the situation with the addicted inmates. The next three readings focus on the interior transformation required of the volunteers. The last reading contains the call to action. As explained at the TAP meeting, the Gerasene Demoniac quite accurately represents the un-recovered addict.

The key take away for the TAP volunteers was that the only true help for the demoniac / addict is Jesus Christ. The apostles *bring Jesus* into proximity with the demoniac, and it is Jesus that performs the necessary action. And the action is deliverance from unclean spirits.

The next three readings instruct the volunteers in how to bring Jesus into proximity with the addict through personal transformation. The Gospel message is counterintuitive, and this need for personal transformation on the part of the volunteer comes as quite a shock. The message starts by requiring a focus on oneself; removing the “wooden beam” that is so hard to see, especially when one *believes* that they are not judging another.

“Listening to Christ is transformative, particularly if one become like an empty earthen vessel.”

Once the beam is removed, the next step is assuming Mary of Bethany’s posture: drawing closer to Christ, sitting at His feet, “listening to him speak.” Listening to Christ is the only way to discern true assistance from enabling actions. Listening to Christ is also transformative, particularly if one become like an empty earthen vessel.

When we are close to the Mother of God, and we follow her instructions to “do whatever he tells [us]” in our powerlessness, we can be filled with the water that is the grace of his Holy Spirit. And that grace can be transformed into the wine of His love which is shareable with others.

It is the attraction of peace, joy and love - the interior disposition of the volunteer united with Christ - that heals, not words and not programs. The final reading does commission the volunteers to go out and act in the name of Jesus.

The Calix Society was founded by men who maintained their sobriety and grew spiritually through the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It is the Real Presence that our inmates need most when they get out of jail. Many are not Catholic, but in our county almost all are baptized Christians.

These newly released Christians may have no desire to spend 10 – 15 minutes in Eucharistic Adoration, but once they hear the volunteers’ witness of what Eucharistic Adoration does for them; they might be inclined to try it. It may take multiple visits, but at some point the former inmate will relax their free will and permit our Lord to act in them. Then they will truly be on the road to recovery, and truly be a “returning citizen.”

My Story of Sobriety and Faith, by Tom W.

I had two recent celebrations. I reached the ripe age of 79 years old on February 21st and 54 years of sobriety on March 1st. I know I wouldn't have reached the former without the latter. As I reflect on Step 3 and my 3 stages of growth in sobriety, my 1st stage I started with my disbelief in God. I thought if God existed, it would be convenient for my wife and 3 little children to believe in Him, as they needed that crutch. They certainly could not depend on me, as I was too busy looking after myself. I remember a speaker once saying, 'I wasn't much, but I was all I thought about.' That certainly applied to me.

My 2nd stage was an awareness at an AA Retreat that God did exist. There was a spiritual part of my being, apart from my physical and mental being. I decided to become a Catholic, as my wife was Catholic and our 3 children had all been baptized Catholic. I was received into The Holy Roman Catholic Church through baptism, in the name of THE FATHER, THE SON and THE HOLY SPIRIT.

I related to the God of my understanding as a God who ran the world like a business: THE FATHER being the President, THE SON the Vice President, and The HOLY SPIRIT as the Secretary/Treasurer. I thought I was so special that I only went to the President when I needed help. For the most part, however, I could handle things pretty well by myself on an everyday basis. My ego had not been broken.

"If a drunken horse thief stops drinking without changing his way of thinking..."

I did well financially in my first 7 years of sobriety. But if a drunken horse thief stops drinking without changing his way of thinking, he just becomes a better horse thief, less likely to be caught. I could talk a great talk on sobriety, but had not really changed much in the way that I thought or acted. I bought a house, owned two cars and had a cabin at a lake with a few toys. In my 8th year of sobriety, things changed rather dramatically. My wife of 14 years had acquired some habits, starting with prescription drugs, advancing to alcohol and then to not liking being around a sober horse thief. She found comfort in being in the company of other males, more to her liking, where her drinking would not be questioned.

During the first 7 years of my sobriety, I was truly in denial about my wife's drinking and her male relationships. She spent a lot of time at the cabin with our children, while I worked in town. I was an insurance salesman and I was gone from morning until night. Our relationship was deteriorating, and I did not know how to fix it.

One afternoon, my wife phoned and asked if I could come home early to spend time with the children. When I went into the house, my wife said she wanted to talk to me alone. We sat down with a coffee, then the doorbell rang. The fella at the door handed me 2 envelopes, saying 'you have been served.' I turned around, and my wife told me the police were on their way. In the envelopes were a Restraining Order, the other a Petition for Divorce.

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My Story of Sobriety and Faith, by Tom W. (Continued)

The police arrived within minutes and I found myself, crying “My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me?” I knew who had spoken those words from the cross. He was no longer the Vice – President. He was the only one that could possibly understand my pain. He had also been unjustly judged and condemned.

“Only then did I become willing to let the Holy Spirit take control of my life.”

This was the beginning of my 3rd stage of spiritual development. Through my brokenness of spirit, right at that moment, I surrendered my will and my life to the God who understood me better than I understood myself. Only then, did I become willing to let the Holy Spirit take control of my life and teach me how to live my life as a son of God, through coming to know Jesus alive in my person. Jesus had come to be with me at my baptism, but I had simply ignored Him until that fateful day.

My greatest desire after this spiritual awakening was to reconcile with my wife, and become the husband and father that I should have been. I spent 5 years pursuing this dream, only to have it shattered when she finally obtained a divorce and annulment.

During this 3rd stage of my spiritual development, I became very involved in the Church and thought I had a calling to the priesthood, entering into some theological studies. This was a time during the 1980s when a lot of changes were occurring, both in the Church and the culture we lived in. There was a considerable amount of confusion and instability unfolding. This dissuaded me from further pursuing this path towards a religious life into the priesthood. An example of this confusion was a friend with whom I had studied, got ordained and shortly afterwards he became romantically involved with a woman, leaving the priesthood to marry her. Being disillusioned, I saw no future for myself being a priest. I did not see myself being a single person for the rest of my life, so I became open to finding a woman that I could marry to share my life.

Thirty two years ago, God brought my present wife and me together to foster, and then adopt, 4 very special needs children of God. Our 20-year old daughter got married last year and presented us with our first grandchild, a boy, on Dec. 31. The longer I live, the more I come to realize how little I know. When I hold my grandson in my arms, look at the wonder of his being, I think of God’s Love for each and every human being. I realize how blessed I am to have seen His Face that night when I had felt so unjustly condemned.

Our Will and Our Lives, by Chris B.

Last week, I was talking with a friend about his difficulty finding a job. Knowing that he was not the “spiritual sort”, I said something to the effect of, “Have you ever considered praying?” He replied with something like, “Wow, Chris, it always comes back to that with you, doesn’t it? You sure are a hard core Catholic”. The conversation continued:

Me: What is a hard core Catholic?

Him: Well, you’re not like those Episcopalian Catholics that are Catholic-light.

Me: Episcopalians aren’t Catholic.

Him: Well, you’re not a cafeteria Catholic. (I shook my head no.)

Him: Wait, are you ***Roman*** Catholic???

Me: Yeah, of course I am.

Him: See ... that’s hard core, man.

Me: Not really. But what I can tell you about my faith is that a long time ago, I decided to stop following whatever I thought I wanted in life and start listening to God. It’s not always led me to places I’ve wanted to go at the time, but I truly believe that God has a plan for my life.

I think that kind of “blew his mind”, and I added in for good measure that when I decided to devote my life to my faith, I decided to accept Church teachings that I have struggled with and that I don’t particularly understand. To me, being a practicing Catholic means accepting the Church teachings ... not just picking and choosing which ones I want to follow.

That was about enough my friend could handle for that conversation, but it reminded me about how we don’t just choose to turn our WILL over to the care of God. We choose to turn our LIFE over to the care of God. As Father Larry Richards writes in his book, Surrender,

A Christian is not just a person who lives a moral life. ... A Christian, by definition, is one who no longer lives his life, but Jesus Christ lives inside and through him.

Living up to that concept consistently is a tall order; actually, it’s an impossible goal to achieve on a daily basis given our concupiscent humanity. But even when we try and fail, God loves the fact that we are *trying*. And, after all, we strive for progress, not perfection.

“We don’t just choose to turn our WILL over to the care of God. We turn our LIFE over to Him.”

Meditation

Across that threshold I had been afraid to cross, things suddenly seemed so very simple. There was but a single vision, God, who was all in all; there was but one will that directed all things, God's will. I had only to see it, to discern it in every circumstance in which I found myself, and let myself be ruled by it.

God is in all things, sustains all things, directs all things. To discern this in every situation and circumstance, to see His will in all things, was to accept each circumstance and situation and let oneself be borne along in perfect confidence and trust.

Nothing could separate me from Him, because He was in all things.

No danger could threaten me,

No fear could shake me,

Except the fear of losing sight of Him.

The future, hidden as it was, was hidden in His will and therefore acceptable to me no matter what it might bring.

The past, with all its failures, was not forgotten; it remained to remind me of the weakness of human nature and the folly of putting any faith in self. But it no longer depressed me.

I looked no longer to self to guide me, relied on it no longer in any way, so it could not again fail me.

By renouncing, finally and completely, all control of my life and future destiny, I was relieved as a consequence of all responsibility. I was freed thereby from anxiety and worry, from every tension, and could float serenely upon the tide of God's sustaining providence in perfect peace of soul."

— *Father Walter J. Ciszek, He Leadeth Me*

A Piece of Calix History...

Below is a page from The Chalice in January 1975, with articles from the Calix president, Robert Johnson, and the vice president, Tony M.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Robert Johnson, Unit 1

As I write this message to all our Calix members, the Christmas story is still fresh in our minds. We celebrated this beautiful Holy Day by paying homage to Him in the form of worship, and gift giving to our loved ones. Yet, we, who are members of Calix have received the greatest gift that God could bestow on us — the gift of serene sobriety.

The dictionary definition of grateful is as follows: "warmly or deeply appreciative of kindness or benefits received".

We are reborn in a sense, and for this we are obligated and indebted. How do we best repay this obligation or debt? I suggest these ways would be most pleasing to God — spreading the word of Calix — an extra Mass each week — a Rosary on occasions seeking the intercession of the Blessed Lady for our continued sobriety — asking her aid for other unfortunate suffering alcoholics, who inwardly are begging for the gift of sobriety which has so generously been GIVEN to each of us. Why not extend a helping hand to the Pastor of your Parish — offering your personal assistance in helping him with problem drinkers — he is sure to have some.

Attempt to imitate Matt Talbot in his quest for sanctity — even though we shall never attain perfection in this life — we should constantly strive for it.

Each one of us can be modern day apostles in this strife-torn world with the tools we have been given.

WON'T YOU PLEASE HELP?



CALIX CONFERENCE NOTES

GREAT BRITAIN

Dear Member,

Those of us, who were lucky enough last year to be able to attend the Calix Conference, all expressed our pleasure to what we described as the happy relaxed mood of the weekend. Some of us wondered why this feeling should apply more to the 1974 Conference than usual. The conclusion arrived at is, that it was due to the absence of business discussion. More involvement in the actual understanding of what Calix is all about, that of sharing our spiritual progress and feelings with each other.

Members demonstrated, and it is infectious to those who came in contact with us, that freedom from tension and fear which comes from a conscious contact with God, and with the goodness of feeling free with each other. The complications as to whether we should be Catholic A.A. or Calix A.A. is at last behind us. We have allowed the fresh wind of spiritual development to enter into our very being. As a result we realize that Calix to any Alcoholic is one more step toward that plane we are all seeking in one way or another, how to free the spirit and the mind from confusion and fear, thereby allowing us greater scope to work more enthusiastically with our fellow alcoholics, families and communities as a whole.

Through Calix we learn more than ever the importance of where our first duties lie, we can judge best what to do for those in need, where we feel they can receive the best help, when and what type of help is best needed within the limitations of our knowledge.

Calix — a Society of men and women alcoholics and families, who gather together for spiritual development, to pray for those in need, that is what we are. No longer then, need we seek the identity of Calix, we have found it.

In an effort to allow the Annual Conference to concentrate fully then on being a relaxed weekend we, the National Committee, feel that although business must still be discussed, that problems will arise from time to time, that progress will mean change from time to time, this is best taken care of at an Annual Delegates Conference.

Sincerely,
Tony M.
National Vice-Pres.

Editor’s Note

- At Calix, we strive to be a source of inspiration and encouragement to each other, geared to our growth toward spiritual maturity.
- For the Chalice newsletter, we want to share our members’ recovery and spiritual journeys, recognizing that each individual is on a different part of that journey or path!
- So, wherever you are on your recovery / spiritual journey, please consider writing an article for the Chalice
- For 2019, our theme for the Chalice is the Steps and how your Catholic faith influences your recovery program.
- Please send submissions to Chris B. (editor) at christinabongiovanni@hotmail.com.

Edition	Topic	Deadline for Submission
May/June	Steps 4, 5, 6 & 7	May 1
July/August	Steps 8 & 9	July 1
September/October	Step 10	September 1
November/December	Steps 11 & 12	November 1

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