



# the Chalice

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Gaylen E.

Welcome to Fall, everyone! Like it or not, here it comes. Many people welcome the change of seasons, while others lament the season past. But all are needed for the cycle of life to flourish.

So too with our 12 step programs and our path to spiritual growth. To sustain recovery and pursue salvation, we must move forward, and continue to grow and change. And this cannot be done without the self-awareness that we must achieve through continuing to take stock of our personal progress.

And so, the 10th step, "Continued to take a personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it", is the topic of this Sept/Oct Chalice edition. Many consider the 10th step, along with the 11th and 12th to be maintenance steps. While true, they are also the steps which help us to grow. Surely, without the spiritual growth of self-awareness and the willingness to make amends, we can neither "fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us", nor "Love your neighbor as yourself", as the Big Book and the Gospel of Luke tell us.

The Calix Society must take inventory as well, if we are to do God's Will and develop into the most effective and relevant resource for those we would serve. We did this at our August retreat, as we looked back over the past year, and what we had accomplished.

The largest and most challenging task of the past year for the Calix Board of Directors was opening our Credo to include Catholics in recovery from addictions other than alcoholism. For some, this was a very divisive issue. We took great care to consider all members' views in our effort to achieve these changes. Many prayers, meetings and discussions went into our efforts to increase our open welcome to all suffering Catholics in need of sobriety and salvation in the changing recovery landscape of our current times.

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

We also worked to further develop the committee structures for our national board that would allow us to have the focus and resources necessary to help lead the Society forward in achieving our goals.

We formed a Membership Committee to help both sustain our current units and in supporting new unit formation. We evolved our Nominating Committee into a full-time standing committee, which in turn helped develop further criteria for our Board nominees. The Communications Committee launched an updated format for our Chalice newsletter, and published a new 'Calix Society – Prayers, Scripture and Meditations' booklet which introduced the revised Credo. Much background work was done by the Outreach Committee in developing liaisons in the Arlington Diocese which can serve as templates for other units. In addition, our Online Calix meeting has continued to grow, and our website continues to develop.

But we have much more to do, including developing better bridges between our local units and the national Society, and engaging our membership in direct support of the Society's goals. We need to increase our effectiveness in service to those alcoholics and addicts most in need of Christ's sanctifying salvation in recovery.

We ask the Holy Spirit to continue to guide us. And we ask for your prayers and assistance.

**Sacrament of Reconciliation, by Fr Doug McKay**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation also called the Sacrament of Confession, Penance, Conversion, and Forgiveness was *instituted by Christ to give grace* and to give Himself in a direct and personal way.

On one occasion a little girl went to confession, got her absolution, and received her penance. Ten minutes later, she returned to the confessional. Recognizing her voice, the priest asked, “Weren’t you just in here, little one?”

“Yes, Father,” she said.

“Then why are you back again?”

**“For more grace, Father, more grace!”**

*A sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace.*

In our Calix Society, we participate in a 12 Step program. In all the Steps we discuss our Catholic faith, and when we share on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> steps we speak and learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Discussing the 4<sup>th</sup> Step, the Moral Inventory, we consider the Examination of Conscience that we do before confessing our sins. On the 5<sup>th</sup> Step, we see how the penitent admits his sins to God, oneself, and another human being through the priest. And when we come to the 10<sup>th</sup> Step, we realize that the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Steps are not terminal. Here on the 10<sup>th</sup>, we continue to take our moral inventory by examining our conscience and confessing our sins in a direct and personal way to God through the priest.

How often I have heard, “I don’t need a middle man to confess my sins; I go directly to God.” Saint John Vianney who heard confessions sometimes up to 18 hours a day, once said, “The priesthood is the love of the Heart of Jesus.” He didn’t say that because the priest is above everyone else. We are all brothers and sisters in the Lord. That graceful quote means that Jesus Christ loves to come and act in our souls in a direct and personal way through His sacramental priesthood.

In the Diary of Divine Mercy, Jesus tells Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska that the priest acts only as a screen in the confessional. In paragraph 1602, Jesus says to her, “When you approach the confessional, know this, that I Myself am waiting there for you. I am only hidden by the priest, but I Myself act in your soul.” And in paragraph 1448, Jesus, the true priest, tells us that the greatest miracles take place in the Tribunal of His Mercy, *the Sacrament of Reconciliation*, and the miracles are incessantly repeated, and that we don’t

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## Sacrament of Reconciliation, by Fr Doug McKay

have to go on great pilgrimages to receive these wonderful divine signs. All we need to do, He says to her, is to come in faith to the feet of His priests and the miracle of Divine Mercy will be fully demonstrated.

Also, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not only a direct way to the Lord but a personal encounter with God as well. Surely, we can meditate on the Gospel scenes by imagining ourselves with the Lord, but the meditations become more contemplative through His sacramental grace. Our Mass becomes more fruitful and our meditations and contemplations more profound and personal after a good confession and worthy Holy Communion, because sacraments are floodgates of grace, transcending us to God Himself in a very unique and personal way.

Before my deeper understanding of sacramental Confession, I would read the Gospels and envy the ones who had personal contacts with Jesus. How I wished I could have been that deaf man when Jesus took him off by himself and healed him, or one of the blind men that He touched and healed, or one of the paralytics He healed, or even one of the dead persons that the Lord God brought back to life. And how I wished that I could hear Him say to me as He said to others: “Your sins are forgiven!”

Today, I no longer envy my brothers and sisters who had those personal encounters with Jesus in His Gospel days, because I realize, more than ever, that Jesus personally encounters me in the confessional, especially when I confess serious sins. Now I know—by His felt touch of forgiveness, peace, and love—that when I make a good and worthy confession through the priest, I hear the Lord Himself say to me in a direct and personal way: *“I absolve you from all your sins.”*

Therefore, whenever we make a good and honest confession, no matter how mortal our sins may be—even through alcohol or drug abuse—Jesus directly and personally encounters us with His saving grace to heal our spiritual deafness, blindness, paralysis, and deadness. Always, through this life-giving sacrament, a graceful change is wrought in our souls. Walking out of the confessional may often feel like walking out of a vertical casket from darkness into light, from sin into grace, and from spiritual death into abundant life that Christ bestows upon us in His sacramental signs and wonders.

*Walking out of the confessional may often feel like walking out of a vertical casket from darkness into light.*

O how saving and graceful this Sacrament of Reconciliation!

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

**62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Calix Retreat – Recap**

This year's annual retreat was held in Washington, D.C. during the "dog days of summer" – August 2 through 4. The Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement lovingly welcomed retreatants to the Washington Retreat Center, which is located directly next to the St John Paul II National Shrine and a hop, skip and jump to many of Washington, D.C.'s Catholic treasures.

Fr. Paul Richardson was this year's retreat director, and he gave a series of four beautiful reflections throughout the retreat. Fr. McKay, our Calix chaplain, also gave several talks and shared pastoral duties with Fr. Paul such as celebrating daily Masses and hearing Confessions.

Fr. Paul's first talk on Friday night focused on the power of miracles. Saturday, he spoke about the Eucharist and about Mary. Fr. Paul spoke about how it will be Mary and the Eucharist that brings the world back to the Church.

Fr. Paul spoke about Mary as being the only person that God created that He actually needed. He needed her in order to bear His Son. And she, of course, as the "Ark of the New Covenant," was the precursor to the present-day tabernacle. She contained the physical presence of God in the world when she carried Christ in her womb, just as the tabernacle does now.

About the Eucharist, Fr. Paul spoke about how many aspects in Christ's life (as well as the Old Testament) pointed to Christ as nourishment for us. One example he pointed out was Christ in the manger at His birth. Fr. Paul reminded us how mangers were for food. From the first moment of Christ's birth, He was telling us symbolically that He was food.

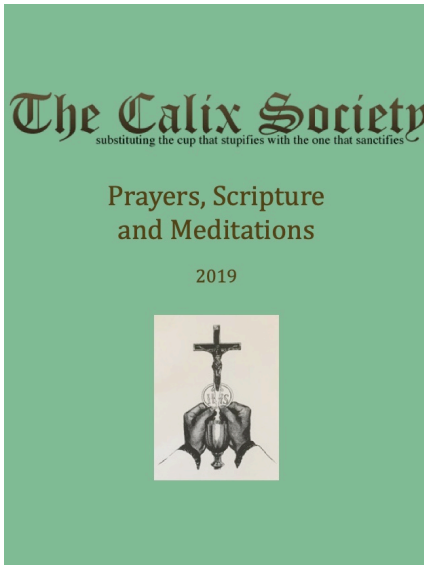
Finally, in Fr. Paul's last reflection, he spoke about forgiveness. He challenged the retreatants to consider forgiveness in an entirely new way. What about carrying the cross of your enemies? In addition to praying for your enemies, how about doing penance for them? After all, didn't Christ carry the cross for us? Fr. Paul challenged the group to consider that doing penance for others would bring a level of courage and love for them that we might not otherwise know.

*In addition to praying  
for your enemies,  
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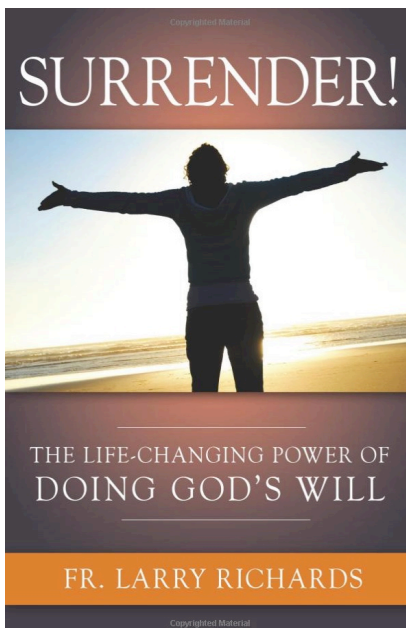
In addition to the aforementioned activities, retreatants were blessed with time on Saturday afternoon to explore various Catholic monuments, each profoundly effecting those who were privileged to attend. And as usually happens, many of the retreatants found the time spent with other Catholics in recovery at the retreat as some of the most meaningful time at the retreat!

**Alert! Calix “Spiritual Swag”**

Two of the items given to this year’s retreatants are available free of charge to any Calix member interested in receiving either or both.



A new Calix book of prayers, Scripture and meditations was distributed. If you would like a free copy, please contact Chris B. at [christinabongiovanni@hotmail.com](mailto:christinabongiovanni@hotmail.com)



Also distributed to retreatants was Fr. Larry Richards’ *Surrender!* Book. Articles will be written (and asked for!) next year on how themes from this book apply to our recovery programs. For a free copy, please contact Chris B. at [christinabongiovanni@hotmail.com](mailto:christinabongiovanni@hotmail.com)

## Prayer Requests

Judy B. – For Bert, Boyd, Johnpaul, Joseph, Barbi, Natalie - my kids who social drink but it seems to be increasing. Pray that they be given God's strength to stop, and to believe in God & His saving grace through His Holy Catholic Church.

Kim R. – Please pray for all members of Jennifer house. For Jorge who struggles with brokenness and addiction. For my daughters Alex and Erika who suffer from addiction in another way via eating disorders. For my brother Ken and family conversion.

Allen J. – For my son Allen who is 30 yrs old, a father of a beautiful 6 yr old daughter and has struggled with heroin addiction for years. He has overdosed several times, has been in and out of recovery for years. Thank you.

***Lord, hear our prayer!***



## Calix in the News

### Addiction ministry centers on the power of the Eucharist

CatholicPhilly.com

By Gina Christian • Posted September 5, 2019

*Reprinted courtesy of CatholicPhilly.com*

While belief in the Real Presence has declined sharply among American Catholics, one ministry is placing the Eucharist at the center of its expanded efforts to combat addiction.

“Jesus is the answer to all our questions and the solution to all our problems,” said Father Douglas McKay, who serves as the national chaplain of the Calix Society, an international association of Catholics in recovery. “And we know where he’s at: in the Blessed Sacrament.”

Currently based in Glenside, the Calix Society “started over an alcoholic priest back in 1947,” said Father McKay, noting that five concerned laymen, all from the Minneapolis area, petitioned to have a 5 a.m. daily Mass celebrated in order to pray for an addicted priest’s recovery.

After several weeks of sacrificial Masses, the priest was able to maintain his sobriety, and the Calix Society — named after the Latin word for “cup” — formed shortly thereafter.

Speaking at the group’s annual retreat last month, treasurer Ken Johnston estimated there are currently some 35 Calix chapters, or “units,” worldwide, with more than 200 official members plus scores of unregistered participants. Local groups must obtain permission to form from their diocesan bishop, and priests are asked to serve as chaplains whenever possible.

In the greater Philadelphia area, Calix units meet at several area parishes, including St. Patrick’s in Norristown, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Media, Queen of the Universe in Levittown and St. Gabriel’s in Philadelphia, where [Our House Ministries](#), a recovery outreach founded by Father McKay, is based.

A unit also meets in Wilmington, Delaware at St. Matthew Catholic Church, and a virtual meeting, available online and by telephone, can be accessed by emailing [admin@calixde.org](mailto:admin@calixde.org).

Calix works to ensure its members’ sobriety by promoting their sanctification. Meetings generally begin with a celebration of Mass, followed by reflection and fellowship. Devotions such as eucharistic adoration and the rosary, along with frequent reception of the sacraments and retreats, figure prominently in Calix’s programming, which was commended by Pope Paul VI in a 1974 address to the group.



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And while the society emerged in response to alcoholism, Calix recently changed its mission statement to officially welcome all who struggle with addiction, both substance-related and behavioral.

#### 'A drug is a drug'

"We've opened it up to make it more inclusive," said Father McKay. "We have people who struggle with heroin, with sex addiction, and even people from Overeaters Anonymous. A drug is a drug is a drug."

Father McKay — who has buried hundreds of overdose victims during more than 40 years of ministry — said that unlike in previous decades, many of those who struggle with destructive substances and behaviors now find themselves battling "cross-addictions."

In addition, traditional "gateway" substances to drug abuse, such as alcohol and marijuana, are often bypassed altogether by youth.

"They go right to the pills and then advance into even stronger drugs," he said.

Tom Gallagher, who leads Calix's unit at Queen of the Universe Parish, agreed.

"Addiction has definitely morphed, especially with the young kids today," he said during a break at the August Calix retreat. "They're in AA one day, and they're dead the next from fentanyl or from mixing alcohol with pills."

Johnston pointed out that despite such trends in addiction, Calix's broadened mission still represents a fairly new development in recovery outreach.

*Ken Johnston (second from left) and Father Douglas McKay of the Calix Society, a Catholic support group for those in recovery, speak with fellow members at the organization's national retreat in August 2019. Founded to help those struggling with alcoholism, Calix has recently expanded its outreach to other forms of addiction, which it works to heal through the power of sacramental grace. (Photo by Gina Christian)*



## Calix in the News (Continued)

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“One of the founding principles of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) was this idea of ‘singleness of purpose,’” said Johnston, a member of St. Luke Parish in Glenside. “Their experience was that when they tried to attack more than one addiction, the effort would fall apart.”

The divide between drinkers and drug users has now blurred at many locations that host 12-step recovery meetings, he added, something that prompted the Calix Society to open its doors even wider. “What we saw is that when we changed our credo, it wasn’t like all of a sudden we had people coming in with other addictions,” he said. “They were already coming. We just updated our credo to better resemble the population that’s been attending our meetings.”

#### A clean house

For Calix’s members, the path to sobriety ultimately leads to a deeper union with God, with the main route being through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and confession.

After 20 years away from Catholicism, and with nine months of abstinence, Tom — a Philadelphia-area resident who attends Calix meetings at St. Gabriel’s — longed to return to the faith of his childhood. Now a Calix member for more than eight years, he observed that “rediscovering the Eucharist is a process” for anyone who has walked away from the church.

“And it’s so unfortunate, because I think only about five percent of Catholics even really know what transubstantiation is,” he said. “They don’t appreciate what’s happening; if everybody did, the place would be jammed.”

The sacrament of reconciliation is vital preparation for holy Communion, added fellow Calix member Mike. “The Eucharist is so much more fruitful to me when I’ve made a good confession,” he said. “And that’s one of the things they stress in AA, having a clean house, so to speak.”

The fifth of AA’s 12 steps to recovery directs participants to “(admit) to God, to (themselves) and to another human being the exact nature of (their) wrongs.” And while most Calix members continue to attend AA meetings and to practice the 12 steps, the grace received through the sacrament of reconciliation takes healing to a new level, said Craig C., a Calix member from the Lincoln, Nebraska area.

## Calix in the News (Continued)

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Members of the Calix Society shared their reflections at the organization's national retreat in August 2019. As a Catholic support group for those in recovery, Calix focuses on the importance of both the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation in healing the wounds of addiction. (Gina Christian)

"We need to learn to forgive ourselves and understand that God loves us the way we are, trying to be the right person that we believe God wants us to be," he said. "He doesn't love our sins, but he loves us, as is, right now."

#### Healing for all involved

That healing extends to the families and friends of those struggling to overcome addiction, said Mike Maher, a Calix member since 2014. Maher, who lives in the Diocese of Arlington, began attending meetings after witnessing two loved ones battle substance abuse. He said the meetings enable participants "to appreciate both sides" of the addiction experience, while "bringing them together in Christ."

"I get a lot of hope through Calix because I see the miracle happening," he said. "I'm seeing others in recovery, and it gives me tremendous compassion. At the same time, we hear from the affected family and friends, and how addiction has impacted them."

After years of spearheading the Calix Society, both Father McKay and Johnston continue to marvel at how sacramental grace and a supportive community can radically renew lives wounded by addiction.

"The Eucharist is heaven's gravity, drawing us home," said Father McKay, while Johnston added that the bonds formed through the Eucharist counter the isolation that often leads to substance abuse. "God didn't create us to be alone," he said. "And when we witness to one another what God has done in our lives, people find hope, and that's really what our Catholic faith is all about."

**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.
- 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](mailto:christinabongiovanni@hotmail.com).

Edition	Topic	Deadline for Submission
November/December	Steps 11 & 12	November 15

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The Calix Society  
PO Box 26  
Glenside, PA 19038  
800.398.0524