# affiliation. They are beautiful examples of Christian concern for any who are suffering in this way. I give them my wholehearted endorsement and beg God’s blessing upon their noble efforts.”

# One criticism of Calix, often expressed but completely erroneous, is that the Society is divisive and that it is a “Catholic A.A.” Nothing could be farther from the truth. Calix does not attempt to sober anyone up. An active alcoholic or addict is not ready mentally or spiritually for Calix membership. As stated in the “Credo,” the Society is “an association of Catholic alcoholics, drugs addicts, and family members and friends affected by addiction, who are maintaining their sobriety through participation in their Catholic faith and a 12 Step program.”

# Accordingly, when approached to help someone still bogged down in the disease, the first effort of a Calix member is to get the suffering man or woman into a detoxification center, a treatment facility or to join a 12 Step recovery group. When the recovering person achieves some measure of sobriety, he or she is ready for Calix.

# In a letter to the Calix Society on May 15, 1962, Bill Wilson, one of the founders of A.A., wrote: “As you know I always have been personally partial to all persons or organizations whose good will and helpfulness to A.A. is beyond question. You need not have said that you strive to keep your efforts within the framework of the traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. I know you have tried and have succeeded.”

# So much for the history and structure of Calix. What does all this activity mean to a Calix member personally? To comprehend this, one must have some understanding of the recovering alcoholic and addict in the early stages of their battle for sobriety. Here is a human being, just like anybody else, who has been through a terrifying experience. Surely, they have reached a low, low bottom. This could include the loss of a job, the enmity of spouse and children, the scorn of friends, or even a serious crime. Now, for whatever reason, they have pulled themselves together and have rid their body of a daily intake of alcohol and drugs. But they are frightened and alone. They have made so many promises they did not keep and have so much work they didn’t do that nobody trusts them. In fact, the alcoholic or addict often does not trust themself. They fear they will not make it in sobriety. They think the bottle and drugs will bring a quick solution to their problems. It was their “friend” in the past, dulling all anxiety and producing a pleasant euphoria. Now, day by day, every day, they must face the world and its problems without this “crutch.” This is what Calix, and the 12 Step programs can do: they become the crutches which carry one along, not for tomorrow, but “one day at a time.”

# Letters and phone calls come into Calix from people in all parts of the world. Some are well-educated, professional individuals and others are less advantaged, but they all speak a common tongue. They are humble, grateful, and happy.

# A few members use expressions that tell a story in themselves. A man in Portland, Oregon, writes: “I have been clean now for two years.” Another member in Billings, Montana, puts it this this way: “The Storm is quiet.” From Sioux Falls, South Dakota: “We have asked God, in our simple way, to tell us who we are and what He wants us to do, and to give us the will to do it. We have the answer.”

# “Do you know,” Montroy wrote, “of any other society or organization inside or outside the Church whose purpose so clearly gives absolute assurance of a complete victory over alcoholism and drug abuse as the Calix Society? If there is, I have not heard of it. Calix also includes a definite place for the innocent victims of alcohol and drugs by giving them the confidence that there really and truly is a tomorrow of real joy, peace, and security. They know they can march proudly beside their loved ones who are on the pathway to serenity and confidence unafraid.”

# Today Calix is in its fourth quarter century, eagerly expecting new life and growth. The field is unlimited because alcoholism and addiction are rampant, claiming new victims every day. Perhaps the disease will never be conquered completely, but the sincere men and women who are ready to escape the torment of this dreadful affliction have the answer of the Calix Society: “Substitute the cup that sanctifies for the cup that stupefies.” *Revised July 2021*

# **Calix**

# **What**

# **And**

# **Why**

## 

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If 12 Step recovery programs are accepted as the best therapy for those afflicted with the disease of alcoholism and addiction – a view also held by the Calix Society – why is there a Calix Society, and what does it do? Answers to these questions are vital to all recovering Catholic alcoholics and addicts (and those affected by these diseases) who are attempting to achieve and maintain a sober and serene life.

Consider the individuals, men or women, who have spent a long time, often many years, unwittingly developing a physical dependence on alcohol or other substances. Finally, they reach the end of the line – physically, mentally and spiritually. Let us assume that one way or another they manage to put together a short period of sobriety and serenity and are tentatively testing 12 Step recovery programs. Well and good! Their physical condition improves rapidly and, after a longer period, so does the emotional and mental side of their lives. But what about their Spiritual condition?

For Catholics something more is needed. They realize that the 12 Step programs advocate recourse to a “Higher Power” - God, but they also know that these programs are necessarily non-denominational. Having been raised in a church rich in traditions, dogma, scripture, and ritual, these recovering alcoholics and addicts, friends, and family members, begin to yearn once again for the faith they probably have neglected or abandoned.

At this point the Calix Society can say: “Come back home. You must maintain your sobriety through your affiliation with 12 Step recovery programs but let us help you to regain the spiritual life without which you may not succeed in the never-ending fight against your addiction.”

William Montroy, a founder of the Calix Society, stated it this way: 12 Step recovery programs “restore your health and keep you from an early grave. Calix saves your soul and puts you on the road to heaven.”

So, briefly, we have the “Why” of Calix. Now what is Calix? The “Credo” of the society succinctly tells the story:

Calix is an association of Catholic alcoholics, drug addicts, and family members and friends affected by addiction, who are maintaining their sobriety through participation in their Catholic faith and a 12 Step program.

Our first concern is to interest Catholics with these problems in the virtue of total abstinence. Our second stated purpose is to promote the spiritual development of our membership. Our gathering today is an effort in this direction. Our conversation and our association together should be a source of inspiration and encouragement to each other, geared to our growth toward spiritual maturity.

Our participation in all other spiritual activities of Calix, such as the frequent celebration of the Liturgy, reception of the Sacraments, personal prayer and meditation, Holy Hours, Days of Recollection and retreats, aid us in our third objective, namely, to strive for the sanctification of the whole personality of each member.

We welcome others who are not members of the Catholic faith, and anyone concerned with the illnesses of alcoholism and addiction, who wish to join with us in prayer for our stated purposes.”

The Calix Society was founded in Minneapolis, Minn., in 1947 by a group of five men, all recovering alcoholics, who saw their faith as a sure path to serenity without alcohol. “Calix” is Latin for “chalice”, and these men accepted the idea that they were substituting “the cup that sanctifies for the cup that stupefies.”

After the Society’s formal organization in 1949, growth was slow, but it came steadily and surely. As the aims of the Society became known, affiliated Units were established in 70 cities in the United States. Units later sprang up in Canada and Great Britain. However, there was no central office or director which resulted in a lack of contact and communication. Some Units lost their early zeal while others became practically autonomous.

Society growth accelerated in 1974 when Pope Paul VI received 94 members of the society in a private audience at the Vatican. In welcoming the Calix pilgrims, the pontiff said: “We are happy to greet members of the Calix Society on the 25th anniversary of their foundation. As we welcome you to the See of St. Peter, we express our appreciation of your earnest commitment to working for the elimination of alcohol abuse, including alcoholism itself.”

Pope Paul’s words of praise and encouragement led to the opening of a central office in Minneapolis and the appointment of a full-time director, the late Gene Trow.

In 2021, Calix is run by volunteers and Board Members who answer mail, publish our bi-monthly newsletter the Chalice, publish and distribute literature, conduct outreach to form new Units, and maintain regular contact and support with established units. Online meetings have been established which bridge geographic barriers and unite us in areas without Units and with our international members. The Society is being rejuvenated and once again moving forward.

Not the least of the officers’ work is that of raising funds to finance operations of the Society. Calix is self-supported through modest membership dues and contributions from grateful members.

Although Calix is basically a lay organization, it has been demonstrated time and again that the success of an affiliated unit depends almost entirely on the zeal of a priest-chaplain. The Society is fortunate in the number of priests it finds who are willing to provide leadership and spiritual guidance so important to Calix members and units.

When an application is made for the establishment of a new Calix unit, the group may inform the bishop of the diocese. Some units are endorsed, such as a letter received from the Most Reverend John R. Roach upon his installation as Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis. He wrote: “I am happy to commend the work of the Calix Society which has its international headquarters in this archdiocese. In my early priesthood I had personal experience with the work of the Society and was privileged to act as spiritual director of Unit No. 1, the mother unit. I witnessed the dedication of its members in spreading the message of sobriety and their tireless efforts to promote the spiritual growth of alcoholics in their search for serenity. Though the prime goal of Calix is to interest Catholics in recovery in the virtue of total abstinence ... concern for those suffering from the illness of alcoholism is not limited in any way to religious