



the Chalice

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN By Gretchen S

Dear Members and friends of Calix,

I hope this Lenten season brings you peace and Spring fills your life with re-growth.

Before I became Catholic, I really didn't have an understanding of Lent. My concept was that one eats a whole bunch of fattening, sugary stuff and gets really drunk on Mardi Gras followed by diets until the Easter bunny visits. I don't know about you, but the second I tell myself I am giving something up, it's all I can focus on. Of course, I put "me" at the center. I had no concept of sacrifice with God at the center. The irony is that until I could contemplate Jesus' sacrifice for us, I could not understand a simple sacrifice to seek closeness to God.

This year, Lent has me thinking of my drinking years. I could not put 40 clean days together for 15 years. I think about Jesus alone in the desert with his temptations, and his love for God the Father. What I know is that I would not be sober within God. Lent brings me grat-

itude, and brings me closer to God's love.

I am profoundly grateful to Calix for bringing me to the Catholic faith. When I attended my first Calix Mass, I felt like a prodigal daughter coming home. I am so grateful to our Calix priests and our members and friends. We have the ability to help those who suffer from addiction. What a gift.

I wish you all peace and a blessed Easter.

2016 Cleveland Retreat

To all Calix members, friends and families, The Cleveland Calix Unit would like to invite you to the annual Calix Retreat this year, the weekend of **September 16-18, 2016**. In addition to our speakers and liturgies, one activity we plan to include is the chance to visit Dr. Bob's House in Akron, Ohio.

We are excited to have this opportunity. More information will be coming soon. We hope you can save the dates and plan on attending!

Thank you,
Cleveland Calix Retreat Committee



My Dear Friends,

For this powerful season of Lent, I offer you this poem for your reflection.

Lift Me, Lord

Lift me, Lord, for I fall and nothing stays me, loveless and heedless, without faith or fear. I long to rise but lie unmoving here: the very self that wishes disobeys me.

Though one, my self divides and then betrays me: at once both dead, alive; sad, full of cheer; not able - though I can - to persevere, I flee the sin that tangles and delays me.

So obstinate am I, so steeled in will, that fear of being lost and fear to lose you have never yet dissuaded me from ill.

Work, then, your power and mercy so I choose you, since I know some who mend each day - and still find in myself but fresh desire to bruise you.

Miguel de Guevera, *a 17th century Spanish monk*



May the anticipation of the Risen Christ build in you.

2015 Year End budget. The Board was able

to finish the year with \$100 dollars of income over expenses and a full prudent reserve. We are grateful for a generous contribution of \$2000. Hopefully, you'll recognize that without gifts above our meager dues, we'd soon be operating in the red. Back over 20 years ago when I was drinking, I'd pay over \$25 for a bottle of Scotch, so the dues to Calix seem, to me at least, a trivial sum compared to the benefits derived. Gratitude gifts to our Society are always appreciated.

2016 Cleveland Retreat. The Cleveland Committee has submitted their invitation to you in this issue. I personally apologize for the date change from what was announced last issue and hope this announcement is early enough for changes to your personal calendar.

Seeking nominations for Board of Director Nominations. Requirements: a) Dues paying members of Calix, b) able to give about 1 hour per month for conference calls for Board Meetings. Send nominations to my attention drmikesanders@gmail.com

Next issue. The Board will be announcing the nominations for President and Vice-President in the next issue. Those nominated will have their biosketch in The Chalice. The Board extends its appreciation to those willing to serve.

Fr. Doug's submission. We are pleased to publish the first of two personal accounts from the Chaplain of the Grey's Ferry (Philadelphia) group. May God continue to bless the ministry of Fr. Doug.

Roping In

Bruce G., Vice-President Calix

Many years ago, while I was still a teenager and learning to be an officer, the US Army sent me to its Northern Warfare School in Fort Greely, Alaska. Those of us selected to attend the summer course spent a week on the Tanana River, a week on Gulkana Glacier and a week of basic mountaineering. The idea behind the three-stage training was to expose us to the basic technical skills required to perform a simple tactical mission. If given the mission to set up a forward operating base on the side of a mountain, we could proceed by, firstly, navigating up a river on long boats and establishing a base camp; secondly, ascending and traversing the lower elevations by moving on glaciers; and thirdly, ascending to our position on the higher elevations using technical rock climbing skills. Such an operation is simple in concept, but physically grueling to carry out in the freezing rain and snow of the Alaskan wilderness.

For whatever reason, this memory bubble surfaced just before Mass the Sunday after Christmas. The night before, a Calix friend had texted me, suggesting I read Romans 12:2, scripture unfamiliar to me. The passage read: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” As a Calix member, what is “good” is sobriety - navigating my way off the river of denial to base camp - through continued membership in AA, Al-Anon, or both fellowships. Like gaining elevation on hard, glacial snow and ice, our Calix Credo reminds me that “our

second stated purpose is to promote the spiritual development of our membership.” That seems “acceptable.” The Credo does not stop with spiritual development, but continues to the high ground of “the sanctification of the whole personality of each member.” Seems perfect, sanctification likened to ascending the Holy Mountain of God; makes me think of that everyman, St. Peter, at the Transfiguration. It has been written that the Spiritual Life proceeds through three stages: Purgation, Illumination, and Union. All three stages are accessible via working our “good and acceptable and perfect” recovery program, enhanced through Calix and the practice of our Catholic Faith.

The Credo also emphasizes “our membership” and “each member,” and as I continued reading Romans 12, I learned that “...we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” Back in the Army, when we were traversing the glacier, we all “roped in” together. Even though we spaced ourselves out while walking single-file (setting boundaries) we stayed connected via our climbing ropes, in case a snow bridge were to give way under someone. Rather than the unfortunate individual being killed by falling into a deep crevasse, the rest of the roped-in team would arrest the fall and pull the person to safety. In our Calix group, time and again, these compassionate “prayer ropes” have arrested a fall. More than one of us has been pulled to safety, even as we continue our climb.

It’s an unfathomable, merciful, blessing to be part of a Calix ascent team.

A Witness of Divine Mercy

Fr. Douglas McKay

Chaplain, Grey's Ferry Unit

Once upon an Advent time, I received a Christmas card from a friend referring to the Savior's birthday. On it in the midst of the decorative colors, I read: "He came to pay a debt He did not owe, because we owed a debt we could not pay."

How true, I thought. "For God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life."

However, we simply must believe and trust in the merciful mission of His Son and Holy Spirit to save us from our sins, to destroy our death, and to bestow upon us eternal life that is God's life.

During the Jubilee Year of Mercy, I write the following conversion story about Carl U who did believe and trust in God's merciful mission for him.

Carl, our wayward candidate, first came to Our House Ministries to be a resident at our Venerable Matt Talbot Recovery Home right before Pope Francis' visit to Philadelphia at the end of September, 2016. He had burnt all his bridges and had no place else to go. After only a few days living with us, he needed to be rushed to the Methodist Hospital with liver, heart, and lung ailments stemming from his long term drug use and abuse. During the papal visit, he suffered a heart attack and died. Strenuously, the medical professionals worked on his dead body, broke his ribs, and resuscitated him back to life.

Soon after the 'Back to Life' episode, Hughie, one of our house managers, met me on the steps outside of our Talbot House. Smoking like a choo choo train, he nervously said, "Father, you better get to Carl. He's in a coma... The doctors don't give him much time."

Changing my daily agenda, I drove to the hospital praying for him and thinking *if you want to*

make God laugh tell him your plans. Walking into the Intensive Care Unit, I found our resident just coming out of his coma, but on oxygen and other medical hook-ups. Reclining in bed and breathing heavily, he was peeking at the papal visit on television.

"Hi, Carl, God wanted me here with you today rather than there with the pope," I said pointing at the TV set.

He smiled and moaned, "Ohh... thanks, Father, for coming."

"How are you feeling?"

"I'm afraid."

"Tell me about it," I said, sitting down next to him.

"I'm afraid to die, because of my sins."

"Hey, Carl, we're all sinners. Just as G K Chesterton said, 'We're all in the same boat, and we're all sea sick.' We need a redeemer, and we got one. I told you about the book I'm going to write, didn't I? Remember, my title?"

"Oh yeah, I remember, he said. "I'm not Ok, and You're not OK, but that's OK, by Father McKay," he said, cracking a smile.

"That's right." Showing him the crucifix at the end of my rosary, I continued, "One Cross plus three nails equals *four-given*, so come off the cross, will ya, we need the wood."

Groaning and trying to smile, he said, "I hear you, Father, but I'm still afraid."

"Well, we'll take care of that," I said. Pulling out my stole, I placed the Blessed Sacrament on his chest and ministered the sacraments, including the Plenary Indulgence and a special blessing with a second class relic of Venerable Matt Talbot.

The relic was a piece from my larger portion of the holy man's Third Order Franciscan habit

A Witness of Divine Mercy, (cont. from pg. 4)

which he wore at all the monthly religious meetings in Dublin, Ireland. Father Brian Lawless, the Vice Postulator for Matt's canonization, presented it to me on his visit to Our House Ministries. Also, his Franciscan habit was the burial garment of *the saint to be someday*. What a treasure!

After the prayers, Carl said, "Father, I'm not afraid anymore. You gave me great peace."

"Is it I, or is it Thy?" I said. "Is it me, or is it Thee?" Gazing into his serene eyes, I whispered, "It is the King of Peace.... All your sins are a drop in the ocean of His Mercy."

I could see a great serenity over him as a tear trickled down his cheek. "I know it," he said, "I really feel Him now."

For a while we sat watching and listening to the Holy Father. Standing up and ready to leave, I thought of the possibility that I would never see him alive again in this world. Looking into his twinkling eyes, I said, "Carl, do me a favor?"

"Anything for you, Father."

"Well, when you see Jesus in heaven, put in a good word for me and our ministry, will you?"

"You betcha," he said. "I love you, Father."

"I love you too, Carl."

The next day he came out of Intensive Care, the following day, he came home to be with us. We could hardly believe it. Although he needed oxygen a few times a day, he called himself a Matt Talbot miracle and so did our recovering community.

For the next few months, Carl devoutly lived his new life in Christ like no other resident before him. Not able to sleep so well, he would go to our chapel in the early hours of morning and pray the rosary, read his spiritual books, and meditate. He attended Adoration, Benediction and Mass

almost daily, he was faithful to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and he even became a lector and altar server for Our House Ministries.

Every Tuesday evening, Carl attended our Calix meeting that begins with the Angelus, the Matt Talbot prayers, and of course, the Eucharistic celebrations that brings heaven down to our world for us. At the meeting itself, he liked sharing parts of his conversion story and testifying, with assurances and convictions, that he was indeed a Matt Talbot miracle.

In our recovery home, our enthusiastic resident kept busy. He didn't have much physical strength, but he had a whole lot of spiritual energy. As sick as he was, he ran errands, shopped for food, and he cooked for us.

After our AA meetings, Good News at Noon, he would drape his apron and barbeque for us. How, in a cloud of smoke, he would flip those hamburgers! On Sundays he would prepare and serve an Italian dinner for our community—without the wine of course. I always took great delight watching him seeing us enjoying our fine meals. He loved 'Giving Back'!

And then suddenly one day, right before Christmas, Carl got sicker. Our residents, acting just like his family members, waited on him—hand and foot—caring dearly for him. It was heart wrenching watching him becoming sicker and weaker. At his last Sunday dinner with us, he talked about preparing the 'Seven Fishes' for our New Years supper. For days we talked about it, smacking our lips, and whetting our appetites.

Unfortunately, a few days after Christmas, Carl needed to be hospitalized again. Our hearts dropped with him. So much did he want to continue his good works and stay home with us.

Later, Hughie informed me that he had slipped into another coma and that it didn't look good. On New Years day I arrived at the Jefferson Hospital to minister the last sacraments to him. Walking into his room, I saw him sitting up—out of the coma. Seeing me, he smiled and said, "Im ready,

A Witness of Divine Mercy, (cont. from pg. 5)

Father.”

“For the sacraments?” I asked.

“To die and meet God,” he said. “And I’m not afraid.”

Just then his nurse came into the room. We talked to her about the fun times and dinners at the Talbot House. After a few laughs, I could see Carl nodding and drifting off. Fearful that he was slipping back into the coma, I immediately began the prayers. When it came time for him to receive the Holy Eucharist, I somehow knew that this would be the Holy Viaticum, his Last Holy Communion, and the Real Meal to nurture and strengthen him for his heavenly journey home.

“Body of Christ,” I said.

Beaming, he responded, “Amen.”

Reverently, he stuck out his tongue. Receiving the sacred Host, he fell back, tasting—I could see—the sweetness of the Lord.

Blessing him with my relic, as I have done so many times, I realized more than ever that he was indeed a Matt Talbot miracle.

We hugged and said our good-byes.

“I love you, Carl.... Put that good word in for us, will you?”

“You got it, Father, and I love you too.... Tell the guys I said ‘hi’ for me.”

Then he drifted off resting with the Holy Viaticum.

The next day, January 2, 2016, our beloved Carl drowned in the Ocean of Divine Mercy.

At the funeral Mass during the homily, I likened our departed beloved brother to the ‘Good Thief,’ Saint Dismas, who on the cross next to Jesus rec-

onciled with God and stole heaven at the very end of his life. Not only did Carl reconcile with God, but he also reconciled with the community, with his loved ones, and especially, with his brothers.

Shortly after the funeral, Carl’s graduation ceremony as I called it, I received a letter from one of his brothers. In part, with permission from him, I quote his heartfelt words that emphasizes our ministry Works of Mercy, but even more so, Divine Mercy Itself:

Dear Father Doug,

Once again, I want to take the opportunity to extend to you my heartfelt gratitude... It was very comforting, in this time of sorrow and grief, to hear what a positive influence that Carl had been on others for the last months of his earthly life. To be quite honest, my other brother and I had feared that such a transformation would never be possible, due mainly to the dark path which Carl had been on for much of his life.

However, thanks to you and to Our House Ministries, it did indeed occur and Carl, who embodied the biblical Prodigal Son like no one else I’ve ever known, was able to return to the Lord in good graces. Thank you ... you gave me my brother back and I was able to see him in a way which I had been unable to for over thirty years. As a result, you and your ministry will always have my deep and sincere gratitude....

God Bless You!!!

Because of God’s jubilee mercy and transforming love, Carl died a happy, a holy, and a spiritually healthy death. He gave Jesus permission to pay the debts he could not pay. Between the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, I do believe, our beloved brother made it home to heaven to put a good word in for me and for Our House Ministries. And to be for us ‘Our Venerable Matt Talbot Miracle’.

Truly, Carl was *A Witness of Divine Mercy*.

2015

Eternal Rest Granted to Them

Rev. Cornelius Carr, SJ
 Pat Hewitt
 John Leuzzi
 Joe McGehrin
 Jim O’Keeffe
 Mary Reardon
 Billy Wagner

“We must say many prayers for the souls of the faithful departed, for one must be so pure to enter heaven”- St. John Vianney

CALIX LITERATURE

No Turning Back	
by Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC	\$17.00 Ppd.
Calix and the Twelve Steps	
by Fr. Arnold Luger, 63 pages	\$9.00 Ppd.
The Light of Faith	
by Fr. Francis Canavan, SJ	\$9.00 Ppd.
By the Grace of God	
by Fr. Francis Canavan, SJ	\$11.00 Ppd.
Parables and Ponderings	
by A. Fenker, SPCC, D.Min	\$9.00 Ppd.
Recovery Meditation on the Stations of the Cross (Back in Print!)	
by Msgr. Harrington	\$5.00 Ppd.
Sister Ignatia Angel of Alcoholics Anonymous	
by Mary Darrah	\$17.00 Ppd.
A 12 Step Approach to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius	
52 meditations, & their relation to the 12 Steps.	
by James Harbaugh, SJ	\$18.00 Ppd.
One Day at a Time in Al-Anon	\$18.00 Ppd.
Heaven’s Homecoming	
by Fr. Douglas Mckay (Grays Ferry Chaplain)	\$12.00 Ppd.
12 Step Review (set)	
By Fr. Emmerich Vogt	\$15.00 Ppd.
Let the Oppressed Go Free	
by Cardinal Justin Rigali	\$6.00 Ppd.
The 12 Steps and Catholic Spirituality	
by Fr. Leo Dolan	\$1.00 ea.
Matt Talbot Prayer Card - B & W	.20 ea.
Matt Talbot Medal	.70 ea.
Intro to Calix Packet	\$1.50 ea.
Calix Induction Ceremony	.30 ea.
Calix Pin (for members only)	\$5.00 ea.

Calix Society

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