



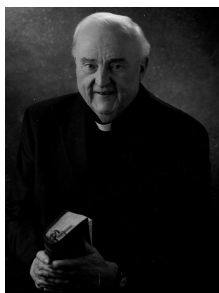
the Chalice

CALIX NEWSLETTER

Volume 39

March - April 2012

Issue No. 2



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

By Fr. Tom Gallenbach

Gratitude

On Sunday March 25th, feast of the Annunciation, I paused in thanksgiving in gratitude of my 27th AA anniversary. There was no feeling of triumph followed by an Indy or NASCAR like victory lap. I just sat quietly in the beautiful church where I have the privilege to serve and humbly thanked God for the wisdom and resolve to make the decision that I did not drink like normal people. That day was March 25th 1985... my bottom?

I was staff chaplain at a SAC (Strategic Air Command) base in California. I was on the staff of a two star general, a one star general and a large group of colonels. I was counted in the latter group. The mission of the bomb wing was to deliver a nuclear response to the enemy if so ordered by the president of the United States.

Overnight I became the sole caretaker of three beautiful human beings, all in their eighties...my father, my mother and my mother's brother. As if by the brush of an artist stroke on a piece of canvas, an angel of the lord painted a new horizon for me. Upon their arrival from the Midwest by air, I

rented a four bedroom home near the base and hired a full time live in helper for the times I was at work or away on assignment. Teresa, the woman I hired, lived with her parents near my home, she would stay in my home when I was away.

There was one problem, and not a small one. I was a closet drinker. I stopped drinking publicly or socially some time before the arrival of my new family. I did not want to draw attention to myself. One of my assignments at the instillation was to attend meetings of the substance abuse board. We worked hand in glove with the CHP (California Highway Patrol) The CHP did a joint study with Merced College (the base was in Merced, CA.) It was determined by this combined group that a driver pulled over and arrested for DWI would have driven 888 days before being pulled over. So many times it was a small thing, a broken tail light, a burnt out headlight or a slight swerve on the road, that caused a police patrol officer to become suspicious. It dawned on me that the clock was ticking for me. Some night I would receive a call to come to the base or a local hospital. And sooner or later I would be stopped and arrested. And if and when that happened, the three human beings under my care and protection would have absolutely no one to look out for them. I had two names in my wallet... both priests. One in Los Angeles, the other in Turlock, CA just fifteen minutes away.

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Chaplain's Corner, (cont. from pg. 1)

I called Teresa and asked her to come over that evening. I said the rosary with mom, dad and my uncle. Having finished, I went to my bed room and called Fr. John in Turlock. I asked if I could drive over and see him. I had not had a drink that day. Seated in the rectory parlor, I told him I had a drinking problem and needed help. He gave me a copy of the big book, and the next night I went to an AA meeting in Turlock. At that time the Turlock group was over forty years of age. The next day I called my staff together. I supervised seven chaplains, six Christian and one Jew.. I was responsible for twelve enlisted men and women and one civilian secretary. I told them that I had joined AA. If anyone had a problem with that they could come and see me privately. I told the two star, the one star and the colonels the same. I wrote to the Chief of Chaplains, the Bishop of the Archdiocese of Military Services and the bishop of my canonical diocese. I notified any and all who had a need to know. Then I went to ninety meetings in ninety days.

My first sponsor, Kirby, a retired interstate truck driver from Louisiana, told me not to make any major decisions for five years. It would take that long to entirely detox. I did what he told me and today I am alive, sober, still an active priest and very grateful. Every year I do a fourth and fifth step, and I am aware that the longer I am sober, the steeper the slippery slope gets. Remember ...one day at a time, and today is the first day of the rest of my life. Peace to all and a sober today.



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Ken Johnston

A Tale of Two Chapels

You may recall that in my last article I wrote about the "Tale of Two Cities", outlining what was going on in Philadelphia (priest scandal, schools closing and merging, etc.) and Washington D.C. (pro-life march). As president of the society the hardest thing I have to do every other month is come up with something that I think people would be interested in reading about. I leave it to the Holy Spirit to provide the topic or circumstance, and it usually works out, even if I'm late getting my contribution to our wonderful secretary/editor/publisher Jim B.!

Well once again the deadline came and nothing was jumping out at me. And then yesterday afternoon it came to me within 2 hours after being in a church and a chapel with drastic differences. And it confirms to me what I had put in an email to the board recently: Catholics in recovery will make up a large part of the remnant of the Catholic Church in the United States, AND I do believe that Calix can be the AA of the 21st Century!

Most Tuesday's a few Calix members either meet at my house or at St. Luke's where the Glenside unit meets. We meet in order to carpool to Grays Ferry for our weekly Calix meeting. Also, on Tuesdays St. Luke's parish has Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament throughout the day. So, yesterday I arrived at the parking lot a little early... and stopped in Church for a visit with

our Lord. I entered the large Church only to find it completely empty except for our lonely Lord in the monstrance on the altar with a couple flickering candles indicating that He was there. The only thing I could say to Him was how sorry I was that he was left alone. A parish of 2,000+ families and here was our Lord readily available to all who need him and not a soul to be seen. And this despite all of the chaos in our parish (our school is closing and being merged but at our location) and our diocese where the trial of a few priests has just begun. Everybody is talking about these events and here is our Lord waiting for us to come to him in prayer so that we can try to make sense of it all. And nobody is there.

As I left the Church to meet up with Tom, a new Calix member, I ran into an acquaintance that was headed into Church, and we talked for a moment about my disappointment. He tells me that people will start showing up now that they are getting out of work. I was hoping he was right as we headed off to Grays Ferry.

On this particular night Fr. McKay would not be there (he is in New York City with Fr. Benedict Groeschel as I write this, taping a show for EWTN about his book. We believe the show will air in May) So instead of our weekly Mass, we would have Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament with the rosary.

In our little chapel in Grays Ferry we had at least 25 people who spent 25 minutes in silence with our Lord followed by the rosary where we meditated on the sorrowful mysteries. I couldn't help but compare the two settings – a large empty Church and this small, crowded chapel; a large Church in a middle class neighborhood and this small chapel in a neighborhood brutalized by addiction. I was never more grateful for Calix!

Recovering people get it! Addicts get it! Alcoholics get it! We – you and me – get it! Here is the answer to every problem we have ever had and ever will have: our Lord waiting for us in the Blessed Sacrament.

While others talk about the problems, complain about the problems and have nothing nice to say about the people that they think should fix the problems, here was a group of people in this little chapel that know that all of them will be resolved, one way or another, with God's grace. We can choose to participate in that grace or stand on the sideline, but either way God will find a way to resolve the problems we face.

If that's not enough, I had the wonderful experience of being invited to speak about Calix at a men's Matt Talbot retreat this past weekend. A nice crowd showed up to hear the talk and many were interested in Calix, having never heard of it before. One of the men even travelled some distance to be at Grays Ferry a few days later, and I anticipate many new Philly members as a result of that talk. The gist of my talk is that people in recovery get it. We need a Higher Power, we need God, we need Jesus Christ in order to not only get and stay sober but to achieve real serenity, real peace, real love! As others abandon our Church when the going gets tough, I see people in recovery looking past the misdeeds of a few (okay, maybe more than a few....), because without Jesus and the sacraments we will be left like St. Peter in St. John's gospel asking, "Lord, to whom should we go?" (Jn 6:68)

I am so glad that today I know where to go. I pray that more people will learn where to go. They need your help to find us! Before you receive the next issue of this newsletter can you invite one new person to check out Calix? Just one?



OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN

By Fran
 "Dancing Feather" Greer
 email: frandfg@yahoo.com

Spiritual Fog

As the fog lifts we can see the world more clearly. The colors of the sacred earth come to life in stages, as the misty morning gives way to the light of a brighter day and a sustaining future filled with hope and renewal. The ways of the earth remind us that

Out of the Mountain (cont. from pg. 3)

our soul cycles just like the seasons of time. When we first enter recovery, the future is dimmed by the fog of unknowing. We are told to put one foot in front of the other and stay focused on today. We learn to walk in the moment and live just one day at a time. Entering recovery is a solemn commitment. It requires courage.

As I walk up the mesa day after day the seasons of life change right before my very eyes. I am committed to strengthen my heart and my recovery with the many gifts given to those who walk the earth every day. The commitment strengthens the body, mind and spirit. Committing ourselves to new behaviors is a personal resolve and a private journey to reach the top of the mountain. I want to see the sunrise at the very top, because for my ancestors this is a kind of ceremony for the human soul. The sunrise is filled with promise and hope, new life and a deeper commitment to my Higher Power. This morning the sunrise seems to be nowhere behind the mist that surrounds me, but I have faith, even in the moment of not being able to see the day. The boundaries of the road are

unclear, but memory serves to remind me which way to walk. The absence of light seems to altar the familiar surroundings. I feel and see things differently today. Perhaps, my perception is tainted by the edge of some subtle fear of the unknown. It is a misty kind of dream place. As I reach the highest point of the mesa, I realize that a gentle glow has begun to appear, and I can see the path more clearly now. I still cannot see the pines or the surrounding mountains, but I know they are there, and I become grateful for lasting sobriety and strong spiritual health.

I have learned, over time, the trees do not die in winter. They rest dormant within the purification of the season and will burst forth with new growth in the springtime. Even though we have known these simple facts since childhood, in recovery the things of the soul of the earth make the longest journey of all time. They move from the head to the heart. No single thing lasts forever, but the cycles of life are eternal. The spirit of the human soul has no other desire than the will to fulfill itself—to continue forever. This too shall pass. Time is the greatest teacher, and our elders knew this a long time ago and found peace within the cycles of time and eternity. They became storytellers and healers. Their greatest joy was to share laughter and love with the children.

Life on life's terms can present chaos over which we find ourselves completely powerless. These times can feel like a thick fog that hides our gratitude and that sense of serenity we have come to enjoy. The sunlight of our recovering journey will burn away the foggy mist, if we just wait it out and persevere through our difficulties. If we trust that our Creator is always near, even through adversity, we will emerge after a short time. The only thing constant within the sacred circle of life, is the ever-changing universe. We will always dis-

Out of the Mountain (cont. on pg. 5)

Out of the Mountain, (cont. from pg. 4)

cover the warmth of success and find that once again that we stand in the sunlight of the Great Spirit.

Calix in the 21st Century

I have just a few changes for the website to report this time around.

First, the information for the 2012 convention in St. Paul has been added. If you click on “resources” and then 2012 National Convention you can download a registration form and follow the instructions to register. You can also pay for the convention online by clicking on “store” and then choose the convention registration and housing if you need it.

The Matt Talbot statues have arrived and look great. The statues were made for Our House Ministry, home of the Grays Ferry unit in Philadelphia. The Calix Society receives \$10 of every sale! You can order them in the “store” as well. Please note that we added a second spot to order the statues in the store for our friends in the UK. Unfortunately, it costs us an extra \$10 US to ship them to the UK. As of this writing we have sold 26 statues and raised \$260 for Calix!

There is a new Category in the forums called “Nutrition for Recovery”. Margo E. has graciously offered to provide information about general nutrition in addition to suggestions for people in recovery. Margo is a registered dietician and a Holistic Stress Management Instructor. In addition to providing information she has also offered to answer questions if they are posted in the forum. While you are there, check out all of the other forums and join in the conversations! And as always, please use the link on the website to get to

Amazon.com if you should be looking to do some online shopping as well as using GoodSearch and GoodShop for your internet searches and shopping. All of these are easy ways to help raise money to spread the word about Calix!

Finally, we want to offer a word of thanks to Scott, who is national secretary Jim. B.’s nephew.. Scott has volunteered to help up out with the website development and hopefully, help us with few things we’ve been looking to do. We are always open to suggestions for the website!

Help with any part of the website is available by emailing help@philly-calix.com.

Inside Heaven’s Vestibule

Almost one score years ago, June 21, 1993, a new priestly season began for me. On that day, I started my new assignment as the chaplain of Holy Family Home in Philadelphia to over 100 residents who were under the temporal and spiritual care of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Since then, over 300 souls have gone home to God under my priestly watch. For that stretch of years those hundreds of deaths may not sound like a lot to a pastor of a large church; but for me, it was burying my little church community—three times over.

Falling in love with my elderly flock, I whispered in front of the tabernacle, “I can’t stay here. I’m always in mourning, facing death. I can’t!” Therefore, I considered a transfer; until, I listened wholeheartedly to my Spiritual Professors.

Whenever a resident died, I heard echoing throughout the house: “Another graduate... with flying colors... summa cum laude.” And referring to the Funeral Mass, a holy soul, Simon, would inquire: “What time does the graduation ceremony commence?” And the wisecrack that always made me laugh: “Who’s that one think she is jumping ahead of the line; I’m older!”

However, the one statement that pierced me, like Cupid’s arrow, happened at a death bed. Family, staff, residents, Little Sisters, and I gathered

Inside Heaven’s Vestibule (cont. on pg. 6)

Inside Heaven's Vestibule, (cont. from pg. 5)

around our departing Catherine. Saint Jeanne Jugan, foundress of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and Saint Joseph medals were pinned to her bed clothes. A pearl rosary, wrapped around her hands, matched the color of her wavy hair. After the anointing, plenary indulgence and hymns, we waited for the Savior to come and take home His own.

Gazing at her radiance, I saw myself peeking into the glory of God. Hallowing the silence more deeply, a Little Sister spoke softly the hope of salvation. Exalting my spirit, she whispered in a reverent tone: "We are in the vestibule of heaven, the vestibule of—"

Suddenly, like one surprised at their birthday party, our beloved Catherine gasped, smiled, and died—right in front of my gaping countenance. There and then, I decided to stay at my vestibule assignment.

In the vestibule of heaven, throughout my many years with the Little Sisters, I have been privileged to witness numerous supernatural signs. At the sacred times, I saw departing souls fixated and reaching for their heads, moved their lips, and spoke without someone—above this world. Other souls lifted up words to someone—beyond this world. And among the many beautiful deaths, there were the fragrances—not of this world—and the glows, like halos, around the faces of those who have passed through the vestibule of heaven—to the above and beyond of this world.

It would take a book or two to describe and detail my supernatural experiences and volumes about my natural experiences at Holy Family Home where we all struggle to live the Gospel. However, when we are in that holy vestibule, we are gracefully united as one body, one spirit in Christ. One sacred time I was united to a dying resident at the hour of death—in heaven's vestibule—and didn't even know it until the next day:

Joseph, a resident, was a master carpenter. Whenever I needed something repaired, I called

on him. What I enjoyed the most, as he worked in my room, were the conversations. Our talks continued with walks in our walled-in garden. He always greeted me, saying, "Yo, Father."

Returning his hello, I would say, "Yo, Joe."

As the years passed, I still met him walking in the garden—but no more conversations. Only, "Yo, Father."

"Yo, Joe."

Soon, even the greetings ended. Yet, for a while, he continued his walks, lost in the garden of his soul. In his last year of life I would see him sitting at the table after the meals, staring into nowhere. "Yo, Joe!" He didn't know me, or anyone else, anymore.

When he was dying, I was showering. By the time I arrived into his room, Father Steve, a visiting priest, was ministering the Sacrament of the Sick. After the hymns of the Sisters, he stopped breathing for a long half-minute. I thought he died. I began praying, "Eternal rest grant—"

Suddenly, Joseph breathed again and kept on breathing. Turning to his daughter, Katherine, also a resident, I said, "I'm going out for my mission Mass, and I will light a candle for your dad."

That night, I got back home about nine o'clock. I wondered, "Was he still breathing?" Approaching his doorway, I heard, "Yo, Father!" Stunned, I saw him alert, sitting up in bed by himself—a resurrection, indeed. "Yo, Joe!" I responded.

"How are you, Father?"

"Me?" I asked, sitting down. "You scared the heaven into me."

"I did!"

"All the Little Sisters prayed around you today. You were anointed by Father Steve. I lit a candle for you. You almost died."

"How about that!" he said, radiating a smile. "When am I going home, Father?"

Thinking he thought he was in the hospital, I said, "You're already home, Joe."

He gazed around trying to recognize something. Then, he reverently shook his head, whispering,

Inside Heaven's Vestibule (cont. on pg. 7)

Inside Heaven's Vestibule, (cont. from pg. 6)

"No I'm not."

"Ah, Father, you're kidding me," he said, grinning and glowing.

"Listen, buddy, get your rest. I'll see you tomorrow, and we'll talk more." I gave him a blessing. Grasping his hands, I whispered, "Good night, Lazarus."

The next morning, I hurried straight to his room again. Before entering, I met his daughter. Breathing heavily, I asked, "Katherine, how's your dad?"

"Father, he died last night at 9:45." A half-hour after I left him.

Gasping, I realized that when I was trying to convince him about his being home at Holy Family, he was trying to convince me about his going home to the Holy Family—through the vestibule of heaven. Now I knew, then and there, right before his departure, at his hour of death (when all his prayed 'Hail Mary's' were fulfilled). I was alone with him in that sacred vestibule, the vestibule of heaven!

There's a story about a little girl and her dad walking the beach at night. The twinkling stars were glittering a spectacular show for them. In the sacred silence, the father asked his mesmerized daughter, "Katherine, what are you thinking?" She said, "If the bottom side of heaven is so beautiful, daddy, how wonderful must be the other side!"

How beautiful Holy Family Home, the bottom side of heaven, under the loving care of the Little Sisters of the Poor, how wonderful my almost one score years with them, and how holy, holy, holy, this side of glory, inside Heaven's Vestibule.

Fr. Doug McKay

Office News & Notes

Many of you who renew your membership by mail have not renewed. Remember, everyone's membership now ends on the calendar year, unless you renewed after September 1, 2011. The Treasurer has sent e-mail reminders to those who we can reach by e-mail, but there are a large number of members for which we do not have e-mail addresses, so we will need to send a reminder by regular mail. This has not been done yet. Please save us some work and expense by sending in your renewal. If we don't receive payment by the end of May, we'll have to discontinue your newsletter.

Membership Goal - 660

Present Membership - 422

In Memorium

Please let us know when we have lost a Calix friend!

*Fr. Leo A. Dolan
St. Paul, MN
March, 2012*

*John Pucek
Pittsburgh Unit
March, 2012*

"May the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen."

Vol. 39, Issue 2, March - April, 2012

THE CALIX SOCIETY
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First Class Mail
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Please check your label-

The expiration date will always be at the end of the year.

Consider joining the Gratitude Club.