



the Chalice

Volume 47

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN By Gaylen E.

Greetings and Happy Christmas season! I pray that you and your families are joyfully celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though it sometimes seems like troubles are always right around the corner, we have so many resources both in our recovery programs as well as our rich Catholic faith to rely on, and to hold onto in rough waters.

In this edition of the Chalice, the theme of the contributors is “God or Coincidence? God’s Masterful Hand in Our Lives”. I believe that you will find a range of perspectives, and I hope that the essays will resonate with you as you meditate on the topic as it relates to your own life.

In addition, during the 2018 retreat in Malvern, PA, those who attended were blessed with some beautiful prayers that were said during Mass. I believe that these are prayers which would benefit every Calix member, and we have reprinted them in this edition. Perhaps they could be used during Calix meetings, during Calix Masses, or in your own quiet prayer time.

Finally, I wanted to update you on news from the Board of Directors. In the last edition of the Chalice, I wrote that I would like to share with you the work of the Board in an effort to make more transparent what we are focused on. The last several months of Board meetings have focused almost exclusively on developing a clear vision and description of who Calix is and who we need to be in order to best serve the needs of our membership. In general, this refers to the long-standing description, as stated in the Credo, of Calix being an association of Catholic alcoholics. The Board has been engaging in discussions about whether or not we need to alter the Credo to be more overtly inclusive of those with addictions that are not related to alcohol, in light of the current recovery landscape.

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President's Column (Continued)

The reason that the Board is engaging in this with such intensity is because it was raised multiple times at the annual retreat in Malvern, and because the majority of the Board believes that the words used to currently describe Calix (i.e., in the Credo) need to recognize that it is not just alcoholics that attend Calix, and it is not just alcoholics who are welcome into the Calix Society.

Once we land on a unified message, we can carry this message forward through the work of our developing Outreach, Membership and Communications committees. More to come on this.

We very much want to consider the views of the Calix membership as we move forward on these important discussions. If you would like to add your views, please contact me at gaylenemond@gmail.com.

And we ask for your prayers, that the Holy Spirit may guide us in our efforts, and that those suffering in alcoholism and addiction may find the hope of a better life through sobriety and faith in our loving and merciful Lord God, and his Son, whose birthday we celebrate this Christmas season.

May Jesus continue to look upon you with eyes of divine pleasure and may He transform you more in Him.

I leave you with this quote from Pope Francis' Angelus address delivered in St. Peter's Square in Rome on Sunday, Laudate Sunday, 12/16/18:

"...in order to receive the Lord's invitation to joy, it is necessary to be people willing to call ourselves into question. What does this mean? Just like those who, after listening to the preaching of John the Baptist, ask him: 'You preach this, but we, "What then shall we do?"' (Lk 3:10).

What should I do? This question is the first step for the conversion that we are called to carry out during this Season of Advent. Let each of us ask ourselves: what should I do? A very small thing, but 'what should I do?'. And may the Virgin Mary, who is our mother, help us to open our heart to the God-who-comes, so that he may shower our whole life with joy."

The Cup That Sanctifies, by Fr. Doug McKay, Calix Chaplain

It was a puffy-white and a brilliant-blue sky morning, May 15, 2015—my 33rd priestly anniversary—when I awoke rushing into the bathroom and regurgitating into the toilet. Beholding my hangover image in the mirror, with my teary and blood-shot eyes, I moaned, “I can’t go on like this, I can’t!” Determined to quit drinking *again*, I remembered Venerable Matt Talbot’s desperate prayer. Crying it out, I prayed, “Jesus, mercy! Mary, help!”

At Mass that morning the first reading pierced my heart. It was about Saint Paul: “At Cenchrea he had shaved his head because he had taken a vow.” Acts 18:18. That vow, I knew, was the Nazirite Vow which included abstaining from intoxicating beverages. Was alcohol that ‘thorn’ in Paul’s flesh, I wondered? Anyway, after many failed attempts to quit drinking, I thought that a vow, or a pledge, could enable me to end my spiritual poison, once and for all!

Shortly after that Mass, I heard within my heart, “Go to Dublin.”

Immediately, I called Ken, my friend, and said, “Let’s go to Ireland and visit the Matt Talbot shrines in Dublin.”

To my delight, he said, “Let’s go.”

“I heard within my heart, ‘Go to Dublin.’”

For 10 days Ken and I traveled mostly all around Dublin visiting all the Matt Talbot sights. On our last day, we stopped at Saint Francis Xavier Church where Matt prayed, worshipped, and took the Pioneer Pledge to offer his abstinence for souls who suffered with alcoholism. In the rectory Ken and I became members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart. Father Bernard McGuckian, SJ, Central Director of the Pioneers, witnessed our heroic promise to abstain from alcohol beverages *for the conversion of excessive drinkers*, including mine. Ken took the pledge for life, and I took it for three months with the intention to take it for life after my required sober year.

Back home in Philly my craving for alcohol got stronger and stronger becoming a preoccupation. I couldn’t wait until September 18th to end my pledge and imbibe again. On September 17th, I made a visit to the Blessed Sacrament at Saint Richard’s Church in South Philadelphia. There, in front of the tabernacle, on my knees and face in hands, I recalled a Jewish saying: “Someday we will stand before God to give Him an account for all His gifts that we didn’t enjoy.” Also, a saying of Saint Bernard came to mind: “Man can’t live without pleasure.” Then I spoke to God, “Didn’t You make wine to gladden man’s heart? Didn’t You drink too, Jesus? So why can’t I?” I wanted so much to drink again but my thirst for God’s will was stronger, and I believed that He didn’t want me to drink anymore.

Lifting my head, opening my eyes, and gazing at the tabernacle, I said, “Lord, if You want me to renew my pledge, I must have a sign, I must.” Venerable Matt Talbot came to mind. Knowing his love for the Mass, I saw a chalice in my mind’s eye. That’s it, I thought. “Lord,” I continued, “if I see a chalice outside the church even if it’s a picture, or a pin, or anything resembling Your sacred vessel, I will renew my pledge.”

The Cup That Sanctifies, by Fr. Doug McKay, Calix Chaplain (Continued)

Suddenly, I recognized the image of a golden chalice on the tabernacle doors. “No Lord,” I said, “the sign must be outside the church.” On the marble altar I saw two designed chalices. “Outside, Lord,” I said. Looking at the statue of Saint Richard, I saw another golden chalice depicted in the saint’s hand. “Outside, Lord.” On my way out of the church I saw chalices on the glass doors. “Outside, outside, Lord, I need to see Your chalice outside.”

Outside, on the way to my car, I looked over the pavement and along the curb for anything that resembled a chalice, but I didn’t see one. Good, I thought, and drove away forgetting all about it. Driving home, I became obsessed with my drinking again. Suddenly, breaking my preoccupation, I heard a **bang** in the side of my car door making my window dropped down. Now what, I wondered? It seemed that the window motor burned out. I made a bee-line to my mechanic rather than parking in South Philly with my window dropped down.

Entering the garage to have it fixed, I spoke to the mechanics on their lunch break. As I explained my problem, my friend, Johnny, said, “I got something for you.” When he left to get it, I joked around with the guys. Looking down the garage aisle, I saw Johnny approaching me holding a golden chalice. That’s right, a golden chalice! “Father,” he asked, “can you use this at the recovery mission?”

“Humma, humma,” I uttered, gazing and gaping silently upon the golden chalice.

Breaking the silence, Johnny said, “Well, can you use it or not?”

“Can I!”

“I received the golden chalice, knowing that it was sent from above.”

Genuflecting, I received the golden chalice knowing that it was sent from above through the hands of my recovery friend, Johnny.

Since that ‘Odd or God?’ experience I maintain my sobriety and sanctity through all the spiritual and Catholic means of our Calix Society, and I always celebrate my private Mass with that ‘Golden Chalice’ thanking the Lord for *The Cup That Sanctifies*.

Is it Odd, or is it God?, by Mike M.

In December 2005, Pope Benedict XVI wrote his first encyclical, *Deus caritas est* ("God is Love"), taken largely from the letters of the late Pope St. John Paul II. In the introduction to his encyclical, Pope Benedict XVI referenced Scripture from the First Letter of John, "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" ([1 Jn 4:16](#)). St. John offers a glimpse of the Christian life: "We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us".

Pope Benedict XVI wrote that in these words, "We have come to believe in God's love", the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. He said, "**Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.**" It is in this decision, "Being a Christian", that my renewed faith, the love of God and my love for my fellow man and knowing God's love for me, that started my spiritual journey 3.5 years ago. It is a journey that continues to flourish today, in a direction beyond any expression of words that I can convey. I'll feel forever blessed to have had, and continue to have, both events and persons that have been "transforming" my life.

Looking back, I can identify the start of this journey. It was during the 58th Calix Retreat, July 2015 in Emmitsburg, MD. Before Mass with Father McKay, our beloved Calix Chaplain, I had a couple of hours of free time to be on my own. I had heard so much about the National Shrine Grotto of our Lady of Lourdes, a replica from the Grotto in Lourdes, France. My previous wife had taken an elderly couple from our parish to the Grotto for many visits. It was among their favorite sites. I now know why. So I decided to go visit. The grounds are beautiful. When I arrived at the Grotto, I wrote some intentions, especially for those suffering from addiction. I lit a candle and said a few prayers.

Upon leaving, I stopped and pondered at St. Bernadette looking at our Blessed Mother. I reflected on her apparitions with our Blessed Mother in Lourdes, France. I felt this "flood of joy" come upon me. I've been recently told by a close priest that what I experienced then was Grace. At that moment, a yellow Tiger Swallowtail butterfly landed next to St. Bernadette in a small patch of wild flowers. It brought me back to a place in my youth, as a young boy of 7 years old, living in rural Kentucky. During the summers, I would go into a field and catch butterflies, placing them in a jar, admire their beauty and then release them. My two favorites were the Tiger Swallowtail and the Monarch. Looking at the Tiger Swallowtail with St. Bernadette and reflecting on these two favorite butterflies, a Monarch landed next to the Tiger Swallowtail. No other butterflies were around. I was so moved.

*"I felt this
'flood of joy'
come upon
me."*

At the time, I didn't know what to make of this "encounter" at the Grotto, but it has now proven significant. I have since learned that butterflies are the symbol for Al-Anon, my 12-Step recovery program that has brought some much needed serenity into my life, despite still having a loved one active with alcoholism. This Grotto experience was the beginning of many more encounters to come, like my foregoing, without explanation, that first hospital room in my post-surgery recovery, only then be placed in another room with a young man, Daniel in detox. That was the start of a relationship with Daniel that let me know, that while I may be the seed for expressing God's love for him, I am still powerless over addiction.

Is it Odd, or is it God?, by Mike M. (Continued)

Or learning about St. Padre Pio from a good friend, and then subsequently getting a knock on my hospital door by a Capuchin seminarian that has led me to now explore the Secular 3rd Order of the Franciscans with the St. Francis Fraternity at Capuchin College in Washington, DC. And on my visits to Capuchin College, I've been afforded the opportunity to pray regularly with Padre Pio's relics with some of my Capuchin Brothers there.

There have been many encounters since July 2015, many involving a few special chosen people that God has placed in my life, for His reason. They have brought me even closer to Him. For this, I have tremendous gratitude. Calix has taken my spiritual life to a higher level. Today, the Trinity is the center of my life, for the first time ever. I've always believed in God, but that belief has not ALWAYS been first in my life.

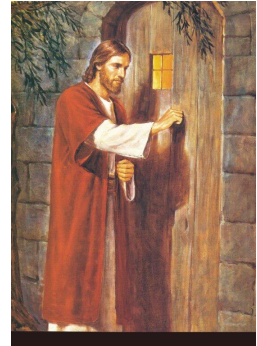
My life today is one of prayer, frequent Mass, regular Confession, the Bible, courses and talks with the Institute of Catholic Culture, spiritual readings, Christian music and concerts, visits back to the Grotto and befriending priests and seminarians. While I don't know exactly where He's taking me, I do "see" a path for me, knowing that I'm on a journey that is meant to share my faith with my fellow man, especially those impacted by addiction, both the afflicted and affected family members alike.

So yes, *I have come to know and to believe in God's love for me*, without doubt. I strive to live my life in His name and His teachings, continually discerning for His will for me as I experience this wonderful, spiritual journey. For me, *it's not Odd, it's **definitely** God!*

God's Masterful Hand, by Chris B.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."
(Rev 3:20)

Long ago, my mom showed me this picture. She pointed out that it is us – you and me – that stand on the other side of the door. She showed me how, in this picture, we do not see a door handle. That is because it is not Christ who opens the door. It is us.



Christ is always there, knocking. Outside of space and time, He waits with an enduring patience for His children to come to him. He has told us that He has infinite patience and infinite mercy. He has told us that we are all His children, and that He rejoices when His prodigal son returns.

And He finds the most brilliant ways to communicate these messages to us. As our Calix Chaplain, Fr. McKay, puts it, "His echoes whisper in our hearts". Sometimes those echoes are the glorious things that happen around us – the rays of light that peek through clouds; the forgiveness of someone whose hearts we thought could not be penetrated; the nudges that keep us sober one day longer during hungry, angry, lonely or tired times. The "sound of His voice" is everywhere; but it is up to us to look and listen.

What do we, as Catholics in recovery, need to do to make sure that the door is open? Well, we work the steps. We follow Christ. We turn our wills and our lives over to His care (no small feat)!!! We keep our consciences clean. And we pray to be instruments to carry the message of Christ, and the message of recovery.

And, very importantly, we remember that – though our faith may be strong and our intentions pure – we may go through valleys where we don't hear His voice, and we don't see His hand in our lives. We have learned from Padre Pio and Mother Theresa, among other saints, that even the most faithful of His flock go through periods of time when they simply don't seem to hear Him. We are called to learn from these testimonies, and to understand that it might feel like WE are the ones knocking at HIS door without answer. God's plan for us is masterful; His timing is immaculate; and we sometimes have to accept the valleys that go along with the peaks. Our faith – like our sobriety – is a marathon; not a sprint.

And, perhaps most importantly, we take all that we have learned about our faith and our recovery, and we seek to pass it on to those suffering. Many, many people don't know that God stands and knocks. They might not believe or accept that He has a plan for their lives. We are called – in both our faith and recovery – to plant the seeds and use our own experiences as testimony to help others by demonstrating His masterful Hands in our lives.

Calix Prayers

At the Calix retreat in Malvern this past August, attendees were blessed to recite prayers that are used by several Calix units. These and other prayers are available on the Calix Web site, in the pamphlet section of the store: “A Word for the Problem Drinker and Program of Prayer”.

For Calix Members

God, bless those who, in their will to glorify You, have adopted the principles and practices of Calix. Shower them with help to repel all temptations to their former excesses.

Refresh them with a love of your sacramental Presence, so that their state of goodness will be a continuing act of praise to Your Providence. Amen.

For Those Who Refuse to Recognize Their Addictions

Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for the salvation of men, give help to Your servants, whose souls in pride are blinded by their insobriety.

Enlighten them to see their illness as You see it. Enable them to understand clearly the harm, spiritual and corporal, coming to themselves and others from their actions.

Encourage them to realize their helplessness and hopelessness without You. Inspire them to grasp your extended hand of help to health and sanity through 12-step programs and Calix. Amen.

For Innocent Victims of Addiction

Lord Jesus Christ, present day and night on the altar, look with love particularly on those whose lives are grossly affected by the intemperance of their loved ones.

Be their constant companion as they watch and wait, pray and weep. Teach them to offer their loneliness in reparation for Your constant waiting for infrequent adorers before your Sacramental presence.

Make them of good heart to fill up with their sufferings what You left wanting in Yours; and bring to happy effect their petition that home, through total abstinence, will once more be a center of goodness and hope, of peace and love. Amen.

Calix Prayers (Continued)

To the Blessed Lady

Mary, my Queen and my Mother, wishing to honor you and to prove my filial devotion and trust in you, and mindful of that thirst which your Divine Son endured upon the Cross out of love for me, I ask your aid for all those who should totally abstain from alcohol and drugs this day.

Do you, Mother of Divine Grace, by your prayers before the throne of your only Son, beseech Him that they may not fail, and that our lives may ever be lived close to His Sacred Heart and your own Immaculate Heart.

Alone we are powerless to accomplish any good, but with the help of your Son and of you, we cannot fail.

We ask this through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, world without end. Amen

Matt Talbot Canonization Prayer

Lord, in your servant, Matt Talbot you have given us a wonderful example of triumph over addiction, of devotion to duty, and of lifelong reverence for the Holy Sacrament.

May his life of prayer and penance give us courage to take up our crosses and follow in the footsteps of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Father, if it be your will that your beloved servant should be glorified by your Church, make known by your heavenly favors the power he enjoys in your sight. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

For Deceased Members

Remember O Lord, the souls of our brethren departed, who by justice are denied for a time the blessedness of Heaven. We recommend especially our relatives and friends; the soul deepest in Purgatory and the one nearest to Heaven; the soul most abandoned and those who have none on earth to pray for them. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

Calix Prayers (Continued)



Prayer to Our Lady of Recovery

O Mary, Virgin most powerful and Mother of Mercy who interceded with your Son Jesus on behalf of the wedding guests at Cana in Galilee, intercede with Him now for me, that I may wholeheartedly embrace the path of recovery from the effects of sin in my life.

Recall, O holy Virgin, the solemn moment when Jesus, your divine Son, dying upon the Cross, confided us to your Maternal care. You are my Mother; I desire ever to remain your faithful child.

Pray, O holy Mother of God, for my recovery that I may do whatever He tells me, and with faith, share my experience, strength, and hope with those who still suffer from the effects of sin in their lives. May your Motherly intercession, begun at Cana, now bring Christ's peace to my soul and witness to your Motherly protection.

Holy Mary, help your children in recovery to feel your motherly help and protection, for you were blessed by God to bear the Savior of the world, Who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Unit Updates

Kansas City, KS - Congratulations to the "Calix Society of Shawnee Mission Kansas", who recently formed a new unit. Spearheaded by President Neil Brown, the unit currently comprises 16 members, including unit Chaplain, Father Viet Nguyen. The unit meets on the first Friday of each month, starting with a Calix Mass, followed by a potluck dinner and then the Calix meeting.

Spooner, WI – Congratulations also goes to the new Calix unit in Spooner, WI. Jay Hands has led the formation of the group, and David Librande serves as the spiritual directpr. The group meets during the second Sunday of the month at 11:30 a.m. in the church library at St. Frances de Sales Church in Spooner, WI.

Welcome to the Calix Family, Kansas City and Spooner!

Editor’s Note

Want to Share?

Since our Calix and recovery cultures are based on sharing, it would be wonderful to hear about you and your units.

- **Unit Prayers:** Does your unit have special prayers that you open or close with during the Calix meeting?
- **Unit Updates:** Have there been changes in your unit that you’d like to share?

> Do You Want to Write for the Chalice?

For the year 2019, we welcome submissions on the following topics (or others you might want to write about). This year, we will be publishing articles about the Steps. We ask that articles be related to how your Catholic faith influences your recovery program and, specifically, your work and understanding of the Steps.

Edition	Topic	Deadline for Submission
January/February	Steps 1 & 2	February 1
March/April	Step 3	March 1
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

Guidelines for submission:

- Please keep essays between 500 and 1,000 words long
- Please send to christinabongiovanni@hotmail.com
- Essays will be reviewed for grammar, and will be shortened if too long. If you want to review the article before it goes to print, please indicate that in your e-mail submission

Annual Retreat:

The 2019 Calix Retreat will be held in Washington, D.C. Dates and locations are still in the works; keep your eye out for more details!

> Have Something To Say, Share or Discuss?

If you would like to submit a letter, comments or questions to the editor, please contact Chris B at christinabongiovanni@hotmail.com