



Parish Heartbeats: Stories of Faith In Action

Finding Faith in Recovery through AA

A profile about an organization of anonymous members might sound like a non-sequitur, but when learning about the work of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) it is preferential to overlooking the tremendous service they provide. SMMP parishioner Cindy has dedicated much of her personal life to participating and leading others in this twelve step organization. She wants you to know help is available, but as a practice, AA does not promote itself or seek members.

Cindy cites a statistic that 1 in 9 people suffer from alcoholism -- a progressive disease of alcohol dependence which can have genetic proclivity and environmental factors (i.e. family, social life, culture) creating the "phenomenon of craving". "People who are problem drinkers must feed the need or obsession for alcohol, physically and mentally. They cannot help it," explains Cindy. For every person who suffers from the disease, they affect 4 more people. "First the (wo)man takes the drink, then the drink takes the (wo)man," she says.

"This is a disease of denial" and that's not the river in Egypt says Cindy. She talks about the ABC's of alcoholism; "Action (chemical effect of alcohol/action on our thoughts and beliefs in our brain) creates Behaviors (we have all been around a problem drinker) which create Consequences (problems of living- family difficulties, work/financial, legal, medical,etc.)."

What role does SMMP play in this non-denominational "higher power as you understand it" organization? Most of the meetings are taking place in churches and synagogues around the country. Churches do not "sponsor" meetings, but they provide the space that allows members and prospective members to attend and make progress towards a more fulfilling life without alcohol. SMMP's meeting was the oldest in the district but will be discontinued after February due to lack of attendance. No worries, there are 96 meetings in Naperville, Lisle and Bolingbrook (which is District 43 of AA). You can attend an open meeting almost any time of day, any day of the week. We

also have people within our congregation, like Cindy, who struggle themselves or have family members who struggle with this disease. It is important that we know about and support the organizations that assist them. We recognize that our parish theme of Open Hearts, Open Arms calls us to be especially mindful of those who are suffering.

Faith is an important part of this process for Cindy. She attended 12 years of Catholic school growing up, but when she confronted this issue in her life, she had lots of "blame" in her

language. Some of it was heaped on the Catholic Church. However, as she learned more about recovery she said it allowed her to remember with fondness how her grandmother and mother passed this faith along to her. Catholicism was the basis of her understanding of the "higher power" that AA talks about in the 12 steps.



"Sometimes when I pray it is as simple as "Help—Thanks", other times it is the Serenity Prayer and other times I tackle the Rosary" says Cindy. Cindy's mother passed away last March and in the process of grief and recovery, Cindy was able to remember her mother as the best Catholic she ever knew. The council of the AA membership gives Cindy a foundation for a lot of her adult understanding of Catholicism as well as other religions. Cindy says "I am a seeker" and "wherever I find comfort and wisdom I try to learn from it".

If you want to learn more about the local chapters of AA you can go to this website: <http://dist43.aa-nia.org> or call 630-355-2622 where a human will answer the phone.

- by Phil Samuels

Parish Heartbeats is an occasional bulletin column that celebrates the ways St. Margaret Mary parishioners make a difference in the lives of others.