



Surrender and Serenity

God's Presence in the Rock Bottom of Addiction

Isabel Rae McKenzie

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

—Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

“PLEASE GOD, DON'T LET ME DIE TONIGHT. If I live until the morning, I'll stop.”

As an alcoholic-addict, this was the only prayer I knew. It's a pitiful, desperate foxhole bargain, one I was guilty of making every night toward the end of my drug and alcohol use, that dark tunnel of time when it seemed more likely I'd die than recover. I hit rock bottom last year, at barely twenty-two: I'd annihilated my relationship with my family; I was broke and unable to hold down a job; I was experiencing paranoid psychosis; I had liver and nerve damage; and I was hallucinating after twenty-four hours without alcohol. If asked at the time about faith, I would've claimed atheism, but at night, alone with my splitting heart pain, I hoped I was wrong.

“Addiction” comes from the Latin *addicere*, meaning “to devote, consecrate, sacrifice.” To worship. All my life, I wavered apathetically between agnosticism and atheism. I only attended church very briefly during childhood, so most of my exposure to religiosity has been through Alcoholics Anonymous. The program is a far cry from Christian orthodoxy but was always enough to make me squeamish. I'd never been able to complete the Twelve Steps because I couldn't get past Step Three: “We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.” By extension, I was never able to stay sober through the program.

On October 24, 2019, I finally surrendered. Following a failed family intervention, I had spent the entire summer and early fall trying to get sober but ultimately getting blackout drunk and high in my childhood bedroom every day. That night, my mother and I got into a fight. She had barged into my room while I was downing an eleven-dollar pint of gas-station vodka. I was delirious, belligerent; I raised my fist and snarled in a harsh voice not my own, “I'll hit you. I'll hit you. Get out!” She said nothing. She fled into her room, climbed into bed, and wailed like a wounded animal. It was the most hopeless cry I've ever heard. At that moment she realized there was nothing she could do. I was beyond help.

I had arrived at the inevitable crossroads of addiction: I couldn't keep using, but I couldn't stop using on my own. So I decided I would kill myself. I poured onto my bedside table every pill I could find. I finished the pint. And then instead of the pills, I picked up the phone and checked myself into rehab for thirty days.

DESPITE HOW LONG I'D STRUGGLED with abusing alcohol and drugs, and despite the insistence of my family, I had always refused to go to rehab. I wanted, more than anything, to be able to stop drinking and drugging on my own – why couldn't I rationalize myself out of these self-destructive behaviors? I was always a top student, I was successful in most things I attempted, and I had earned nearly a full ride to a private college.

I wanted to defeat my addiction through intellect. But addiction is a beast that defies logic, only prey to an act of Providence. AA holds that it is “an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer,”

Just a few months prior, when I could still, barely, be considered a “high-functioning” alcoholic, I had graduated cum laude with a highly awarded thesis. I wanted to defeat my addiction through intellect. But addiction is a beast that defies logic, only prey to an act of Providence. AA holds that it is “an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer,” and thus the alcoholic must choose “to be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis.” *(to be continued)*

Source: *The Plough*, <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/faith/prayer/surrender-and-serenity>

An AA meeting takes place in the Parish Centre every Sunday evening

St Mary's
Parish

Serving
the
Community

Serving
the
Family

Serving
the
City

Diocesan Safeguarding Day, 2020 Letter from Archbishop Martin

Sunday 27 September is Diocesan Safeguarding Day. As your Archbishop, I have made the safety and protection from abuse of the children and vulnerable members of Archdiocese a particular priority. It has been a challenge to all of us to face up to our responsibility to make reparation for the failures of the past. This year we face a different set of challenges and we do so in a situation of considerable uncertainty.

Given our uncertain financial future, we will have to learn to use our declining resources sparingly and wisely. You will be aware that it has been necessary to reduce the number employed by the Diocese including a number of people employed in the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service. However, our commitment to safeguarding and to support of victim/survivors of abuse remains undiminished. We need to consider the implications of working with less and the opportunities this presents to look at how we share what we have. As parishes learn to work closely together, good safeguarding practice can be passed from one parish to another, for example, without always having to rely on CSPS.

Given the uncertainty surrounding bringing people together, we will have to consider how best we approach things like delivering safeguarding training. Information technology presents us with new opportunities, while also presenting challenges for those not used to using computers.

There is a third uncertainty which I wish to address. I cannot say for how much longer I will serve as your Archbishop. As I near the end of my time with you, I want to say a particular thank you for all of the work you have been doing to make the Church in Dublin a safer place for children and for vulnerable adults. Our parish clergy, already under pressure due to declining numbers, have had to accept additional responsibilities in this area, such as ensuring that those involved in public ministry are vetted. I wish to thank them all for this. I wish to thank also the hundreds of parish safeguarding representatives and the thousands who have attended safeguarding training. I wish to thank all of our parishioners who have kept faith with us through this difficult time. I wish also to acknowledge the courage of those who have spoken of their experiences of abuse in the Church. Their stories have been difficult for us to hear but they have helped us to face up to the truth and we must honour their contribution by making our parishes not just safe places but also welcoming and nurturing places for all children and vulnerable persons.

I ask you also to remember those who were abused and to pray for them

+ Diarmuid Martin
Archbishop of Dublin



Parish Pastoral Council

Parish Finances Report

At the most recent meeting of the PPC last week the Treasurer delivered a brief summary report on our parish finances during this difficult time. In the circumstances these can be said to be stable. This is due in great part to the ongoing generosity of parishioners both in the donations boxes we have available in the church and in online giving. The PPC would like to express its thanks to all those who have given so generously. We have no details for online donations for the First and Share Collections as these go directly to the diocese.

For the moment we have no public masses and so we are appealing once again for your support online, through the DONATE icon which is to be found on our website.

THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
CONTINUING SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY

Parish Life

With the imposition of Level Three measures in order to address a resurgent Covid-19 crisis in Dublin, all church services will once again be online.

Here at St. Mary's, we will broadcast **the 9.30 and 11am mass on Sundays** and the **10am on weekdays Monday-Starurday.**

We are hopeful that these measures will be short lived and that we will soon be able to bring our community together again. In the meantime we continue to prayer for one another, for our country and our world as it loves through these difficult and challenging times.

IN MEMORIAM

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Weekend of 26-27 September

6pm Vigil Mass—

John, Elizabeth and Patsy Lynch, Anniversary