



God's Presence in the Rock Bottom of Addiction

Isabel Rae McKenzie

On the night I checked myself into rehab, sobbing and slurring my words, I received the gift of desperation. I completely and totally surrendered my ego. I realized that I needed God to exist, for there to be a force greater than myself that could relieve the lethal burden I was carrying. AA's Big Book describes the path so many in my shoes have followed: "Faced with alcoholic destruction, we soon became as open-minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect, alcohol was the great persuader. It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness."

In rehab, I prayed. I woke at 5:30 a.m. each day – with a discipline I had long since thought myself incapable of – and I asked God to relieve me of my alcoholic obsession. "Thy will be done, not mine." There were nights when I experienced cravings so intense I thought bugs were crawling under my skin, bubbling up on my arms. So I asked God for relief – even when I felt as though I were praying to a brick wall. If my life was an unruly sea, prayer suddenly became my way of throwing down an anchor. It stabilized; it clarified.

Prayer brought a "sense of belonging," as another AA text, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, puts it, echoing my experience: "We no longer live in a completely hostile world. We are no longer lost and frightened and purposeless. The moment we catch even a glimpse of God's will, the moment we begin to see truth, justice, and love as the real and eternal things in life, we are no longer deeply disturbed by all the seeming evidence to the contrary that surrounds us in purely human affairs."

The more I prayed, the less I thought about substances. The promise of AA delivered – rather, God delivered: I was, to my utter disbelief, granted release from my obsession. I began to feel free, despite still living within the white walls of the rehab facility. I began to imagine a future for myself, assess my dreams and goals – which I'd abandoned during active addiction due to the belief that I'd die before my next birthday. This change could only be a miracle. When my mother visited me toward the end of my stay, I was, by her account, a different person – not even my old pre-addiction self, but a new self through faith-based recovery.

WHEN I ARRIVED HOME from rehab and walked into the house, I found, lying on the floor, a card with the prayer of Saint Francis:

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

There was no explanation for how it came to be there; my mom didn't even know she owned it. It now sits on my bedside table. Nearby, I've hung a corkboard covered in quotes about sobriety and goodbye letters from my rehab friends. Also on the board hangs an embroidery hoop with my favorite line by the poet Mary Oliver: "Keep some room in your heart for the unimaginable."

Immediately after discharge, I joined a women's AA meeting and in the months that followed became an active member of the community. I give leads at meetings, share my story, and witness astonishing recoveries in the rooms of the program. This June, I celebrated eight months free from alcohol and drugs.

Every day now, I surrender and give it up. I relinquish my anxieties, my desire to control elements beyond myself, and I trust that I will be led in the right direction. When I wake, I ask God for his help staying sober for the twenty-four hours ahead of me; at night, I thank him for keeping me on the path of recovery for yet another day.

I never thought I'd be sober, and I never thought I'd believe in God. Today I'm willing to delight in wonder and the possibility that there is so much I don't know. Today I believe in a force beyond my comprehension: grace. For by grace I have been saved through faith.

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

Contacts: Fr Fachtna McCarthy, Administrator, Fr Patrick Claffey C.C. Fr Josip Levaković C.C., Deacon Greg Pepper Tel 01-6600075

Streaming and Website www.stmaryshaddingtonroad.ie email: info@stmaryshaddingtonroad.ie

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Message for World Mission Sunday



Pope Francis released his annual Message for World Mission Sunday 2020 on Pentecost Sunday. Its theme is taken from Isaiah: "Here am I, send me" (6:8). World Mission Sunday is celebrated on October 18 in 2020.

Call to mission in the current crisis

The Pope began his message recalling the words he expressed on the occasion of the extraordinary moment of prayer on 27 March. Even in the disorientation and fear provoked by the current international crisis, Pope Francis says the Lord continues to ask "Whom shall I send?" Even as we touch our frailty in the pain and death we are experiencing, we are also reminded "of our deep desire for life and liberation from evil". This is where the call to mission emerges as an "invitation to step out of ourselves for love of God and neighbour" through "service and intercessory prayer", he writes.

Missionaries with Jesus the Missionary

Just as Jesus completely accomplished His mission by dying on the cross, "we find ourselves precisely when we give ourselves to others", Pope Francis continues. Our mission, our call, our willingness to be sent originate in His own vocation as "the Father's Missionary". "Our personal vocation" is rooted in "the fact that we are sons and daughters of God in the Church".

The Church as Missionary

Pope Francis explains that it is specifically the Church that "continues the mission of Jesus in history". Thus the baptized members of the Church are sent forth in her name. Through our witness and proclamation of the Gospel, God continues "to manifest His love". This is how He is able to "touch and transform hearts, minds, bodies, societies and cultures in every place and time."

Response to a relationship

"Mission is a free and conscious response to God's call", the Pope reminds us. A call to mission can only be discerned "when we have a personal relationship of love with Jesus present in his Church". That leads to the question of our preparedness to welcome the Holy Spirit's presence and action in our lives. That call comes to married couples, consecrated persons and ordained ministers in life's everyday events. Another question the Pope says we should ask ourselves is if we are willing "to be sent forth at any time or place to witness to our faith" and relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And the last question is if we are willing to respond as Mary did always "ready to be completely at the service of God's will?"

Mission responds to life

The challenge for the Church's mission right now is that of "Understanding what God is saying to us at this time of pandemic", Pope Francis acknowledges. As people die alone or are abandoned, as others lost their jobs, with the necessity of social distancing or staying at home, the Pope says that we are invited "to rediscover that we need social relationships as well as our communal relationship with God". This situation can increase our awareness of the need to relate to others, he says. God will touch our hearts through prayer which will always open us to understand others' needs. Those of us who have not been able to participate in the Church's liturgical life now understand "the experience of the many Christian communities that cannot cele-

brate Mass every Sunday", the Pope said.

Whom shall I send?

God's question expressed by the Prophet Isaiah "is addressed once more to us and awaits a generous and convincing response: 'Here am I, send me!' (Is 6:8). Pope Francis says at the conclusion of his message. World Mission Sunday will be a day on which we will be able to reaffirm through prayer, reflection and material help our active participation in Jesus's mission in His Church. Pope Francis specifies that the collection taken up on 18 October will support "the missionary work carried out in my name by the Pontifical Mission Societies, in order to meet the spiritual and material needs of peoples and Churches throughout the world, for the salvation of all."

Parish Collections Update

We are very grateful to our collection counters who got together this week to count the money in the different boxes for collections over the past three months. This was a big task as the amount of money to be counted, in notes and small coin was substantial coming to €16,254. The breakdown for this is as follows:

First Collection: €6,815.

Share: €2680

Weekday collections: €3,605

Shrines €3,154

We are very grateful to parishioners for this generosity, which does not include contributions made online and other donations made for the upkeep of the parish.

Our contribution to the diocese (excl. online donations) is €9,495 about 40% of what it would usually. This same is probably true for parish donations which come to €6,759, which probably reflects some increase in shrines as people drop into the church for a 'quiet prayer and to light a candle' in the difficult times.

Some encouragement can be drawn from these figures at a time when there is a lot of pessimism regarding the future of faith. They reflect a sense of responsibility and, above all, a sense of belonging in our community and this is the life of the Church in the world.

THANK YOU

Parish Life

All Masses online

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

In Memoriam

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9.30am Michael, Mary, Joseph and Theresa Mullery
11am Catherine Tierney

11 Oct am Anne and Michael Short

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