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A Catechetical Program for Roman Catholics in Twelve Step Recovery

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By

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## A Catechetical Program for Roman Catholics in Twelve Step Recovery

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Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) and other Twelve Step programs are based on the belief that recovery from addictions is inherently spiritual. These programs are careful to distinguish themselves as spiritual and not religious so as to make clear that they are not affiliated in any way with any particular belief system. Twelve Step based addiction treatment programs further support this by advancing the idea that “religious” refers to the doctrinal and ritualistic practices of organized religion and “spiritual” refers to the personal pursuit of our own conception of God, higher power and even to that which signifies ultimate meaning and purpose. While this is not inaccurate it does tend to form too much of a distinction between the two as there is a rich spirituality inherent in many religions and particular to this project in Catholicism.

This project sought to address this distinction for Catholics in recovery who may have questions about how to understand the spiritual dimension of addiction and recovery by taking some of the key concepts in Twelve Step spirituality and recasting them in light of some fundamental aspects of Catholic faith and practice. To accomplish this, I led a catechetical program aimed at improving the participant’s knowledge and understanding of the Liturgy, the Sacraments and prayer and their relevance to recovery spirituality.

Upon completion of the program, participants were asked to complete a post program questionnaire which assessed improvements in their knowledge and changes in the likelihood of engaging in religious based spiritual practices in recovery. The results support a conclusion that the program did effect some quantifiable change in both knowledge and in the likelihood of

integrating Catholic faith with Twelve Step spirituality for all participants. A particular contribution of this program is that it facilitated a renewed interest for several participants who previously lacked meaningful connection to the Church during this time of significant change.



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## CHAPTER I

### Identification and Background of an Issue in Ministry

In a shared room at a post-Prohibition era hospital for hopeless alcoholics, Bill Wilson, a future founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.), was for the fourth time in two years trying to get sober. In the midst of withdrawal and unbearable despair he cried out, “If there is a God, let him show himself! I am ready to do anything, anything.”<sup>1</sup> Subsequently he had what has famously become known as his “white light experience,” a moment where he risked belief in something greater than himself by suspending his pride and was rewarded with a flash of bright light that brought feelings of serenity and ecstasy followed by a renewed state of consciousness and awareness of a presence he imagined as “the God of the preachers.”<sup>2</sup> Most importantly for him, he felt freed from his obsession with alcohol. According to biographical references, Bill W. as he is referred to in the spirit of anonymity, never drank again.

The doctor treating Bill W. and thousands of other alcoholics had by this time come to understand addiction as a malady of body, mind, and emotion: the physical dimension manifesting in craving and withdrawal, the mental dimension manifesting in obsession, and the emotional in a limited ability to cope with the vagaries of life. After he shared his conversion experience with this physician, including his freedom from obsession, Bill W. asked him if he thought he had gone insane. Drawing perhaps more on insight than from medical training, the Physician replied, “I don’t know what you’ve got—but whatever it is hang on to it. You are not

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<sup>1</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1957), 63.

<sup>2</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, *‘Pass It On’: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World, 9<sup>th</sup> Ed.*, (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1984), 121.

insane. And you may have the answer to your problem.”<sup>1</sup> Bill W. would soon realize that the answer to the problem of alcoholism was a spiritual conversion or awakening.

This realization laid the groundwork for what would become the worldwide fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Twelve Step model for recovery. Bill W. came to understand that the physical dimension of his alcoholism could be arrested by abstinence. He would never be cured of the physical aspect of his disease, but as long as he did not pick up that first drink it would remain in remission. He also came to learn that the mental dimension of the disease could be arrested with a combination of abstinence and a life-long program of recovery. This program would come to include the primary support of other alcoholics and a set of guiding principles that could bring about psychic change. Lastly, he came to believe that recovery from alcoholism is inherently spiritual.

Wanting to share their insights with other struggling and hopeless alcoholics, Bill W. and his A.A. co-founder Dr. Bob S. developed a basic text that described alcoholism from the alcoholic’s point of view. The text, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, known more commonly as the “Big Book” in contemporary recovery circles and as I refer to it throughout this manuscript, contains a set of basic principles derived from noting the behavior and needs of a growing fellowship of alcoholics, as well as insights borrowed from medicine and religion. Central to the text and to the A.A. fellowship are spiritual ideas codified as the Twelve Steps.

The spiritual ideas and principles contained in the Twelve Steps were not themselves new. In fact, the Oxford Group, a Christian evangelical movement, had identified several of them around the same time that Bill W. was getting sober. According to some A.A. historical references Bill W. had been personally visited by some of Oxford’s members and encountered a

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<sup>1</sup> “Silkworth: The Little Doctor Who Loved Drunks.” A.A. Grapevine, Inc. May 1951. <http://www.silkworth.net> (accessed June 20, 2013).

few others through attending meetings held in New York City. The Oxford Group had a four-point doctrine of absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love. They believed these were the four absolute standards of Jesus.

The Oxford Group did not target their message at alcoholics per se but alcoholics tended to fit the bill as sinners in need of conversion. They believed that one must surrender to God, not only to be converted from sin but also to have his entire life controlled by God. To recover, one had to admit he was separated from God and his fellow man and that God could manage his life since he had not done so well at it himself.

It appears that the founders of A.A. were not in disagreement with these precepts and were convinced of the need for five things: (1) a personal moral inventory; (2) the confession of personality or character defects; (3) restitution to those who had been hurt; (4) continued helpfulness to others; and, most importantly, (5) a belief in and dependence on a higher power. Bill W. and his contemporaries were in agreement with these precepts of the Oxford Group but they thought that a spiritual program and not a religious program would ultimately resonate with the personality of an alcoholic. They decided not to align with any organized religion or sect, as A.A.'s message and literature makes clear.

Besides the Oxford movement, several Christian men and women—including Sam Shoemaker, an Episcopal priest, Sr. Ignatia, a Roman Catholic religious, and Fr. Ed Dowling, a Jesuit priest, —had a profound influence on A.A. and the Twelve Steps. Though Bill W. was known to carry a certain amount of prejudice against church and the clergy and their concepts of God, he apparently learned much from an on-going dialogue with religious leaders who themselves wanted to help those suffering from alcoholism.

The spirituality of A.A. also drew from William James and Carl Jung, influential thinkers who articulated the relevance of religious insight and transformation without adhering to any specific theology. This stance had particular appeal to Bill W. and the early members of A.A. as they endeavored for the program to reflect a universal spirituality. Characterizing A.A. as a spiritual program was less about rejection of a specific doctrine and more about avoiding questions about denominational allegiance. As the fellowship grew, this distinction proved immensely strategic, as the loosely defined spiritual program of A.A. had broad appeal to people of all faiths and to those of no faith.

At the time A.A. and the Twelve Steps were being conceived, the terms “religious” and “spiritual” were used more interchangeably and with less tension than today. With the rise of secularism and a growing disillusionment with organized religion since the second half of the 20th century the conception of “religious” and “spiritual” has changed considerably. The effect of these changes, particularly in the 1960’s and 1970’s, was that spirituality began to take on a more distinct meaning. Bolstered by the New Age movement, popular psychology, and perhaps most significantly by the sheer number of people searching for meaning, the notion of spirituality as separate from religion has acquired increasingly more favorable connotations. A Pew Forum study reports that from 2007 – 2014, the Christian share of the population declined from 78.4% to 70.6% mostly driven by declines among mainline Protestants and Catholics.<sup>2</sup> The unaffiliated experienced the most growth.

The founders of A.A. and the Twelve Steps had the great task of conveying the critical message that the alcoholic had problems in the physical, mental, and spiritual realms of his life and that only a spiritual experience could restore him. They intended to promote spirituality as

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<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, “2014 Religious Landscape Study,” in *America’s Changing Religious Landscape*, May 12, 2015. <http://www.pewforum.org>. (accessed September 2015).

practice, not spirituality as feelings, which provided some distinction between A.A. and psychotherapeutic pursuits. Experience had taught them that by practicing spiritual principles and eventually making them a way of life an alcoholic could not only get and stay sober but could become happy and usefully whole.<sup>3</sup> Since their individual efforts to stop drinking had been unsuccessful they posited that an alcoholic must establish a relationship with something greater than himself, and that this greater power would mediate healing through the spiritual experience.

The Big Book and a subsequent text *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* laid out the Twelve Steps and their application to the alcoholic's physical, mental, and spiritual malady. Although Bill W. intended to help other alcoholics get and stay sober, only the first of the twelve steps specifically mentions alcohol. The rest are concerned with spiritual processes including; knowledge of and relationship with God or higher power, seeking God's will instead of one's own, self-examination, confession, openness to change, making amends, prayer and service to others.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Service, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. 1981), 16.

<sup>4</sup> The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous: (1) We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. (2) Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. (3) Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. (4) Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. (5) Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. (6) Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. (7) Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. (8) Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. (9) Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. (10) Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. (11) Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out. (12) Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps of A.A.—and of other recovery programs such as Al-Anon, Narcotics Anonymous and Sexaholics Anonymous—outline a course of action intended to bring about a vital spiritual experience necessary to engender full recovery. Addicts in recovery frequently share that stopping the use of their substance of choice was only the beginning for them and that they did not change or get better until they worked the Twelve Steps. Others also share that they had technically stopped drinking hundreds of times, but were only able to remain abstinent once they worked the Steps.

In my experience as a spiritual care provider at an internationally recognized drug and alcohol treatment center, I came to learn that the Twelve Steps of A.A. had the ability to essentially lead people to a new way of life that turned them away from not only their substance but away from addiction-centered lifestyles and distorted, bankrupt philosophies of life. While facing the issue of substance use and abstinence is of crucial importance to Twelve Step programs, it is only the first step towards full recovery. The primary purpose of spiritual care in treatment settings and as described in A.A. literature is to bring forth the spirituality of the Twelve Steps.

Spiritual guidance for people in recovery includes assistance in finding or restoring a relationship with a higher power or God of their understanding. Further, it includes help in exploring and removing barriers to that relationship which may include someone's shame, guilt, and harmful beliefs about their higher power. For specific ways to relate the spiritual dimension of recovery to one's religious affiliation, resources must be sought outside of the treatment setting such as through clergy.

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The director of spiritual care for the Hazelden Foundation, a nationally recognized treatment program, wrote a clinician's guide to spirituality in which he suggests three elements that form a minimum standard for a higher power: 1) "It is not me," in other words an individual cannot be his own higher power; 2) "It is more powerful than me," in other words, it can do for someone what he cannot do for himself; and, 3) "It wants to help and can help." He further suggests three levels on which this higher power can be encountered: 1) A Twelve Step or other support group; 2) A recovery program as a whole; and, 3) An intangible higher power.<sup>5</sup>

An informal review of spiritual care materials from various other programs support these or similar characterizations of higher power. Further, the literature commonly suggests that it is not necessary to believe in a higher power to benefit from a spiritually healthy way of life, but that it is necessary to develop a higher power relationship so that there is something outside of the individual that is improving his spirit. For instance, believing in nature or the universe and its design and having a sense of awe and wonder about that can improve one's spirit.

Some in recovery have little question about who they understand their higher power to be and with guidance they experience little tension in how to restore a relationship with that higher power. Some have little question about who the God of their understanding is but experience significant trepidation about how to reconcile with a loving God when they feel so unlovable and damaged. And though they may be fewer, some have to overcome a great deal of resistance and misunderstanding in order to welcome a call home to their faith.

Treatment settings as well as A.A.-approved literature do not see spiritual care as an extension ministry of any religion or religious organization. Treatment settings are somewhat different than other healthcare settings where one can find pastoral care affiliated with a

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<sup>5</sup> John MacDougall and Bowen White, *Clinicians Guide to Spirituality* (New York: Mc-Graw Hill Medical Publishing Division, 2001), 20.

particular denomination. Unless otherwise identified, spiritual care in recovery is based on the subjective experience of A.A. spirituality and the universal spiritual principles inherent in the Twelve Steps.

Twelve Step meetings and Twelve Step based treatment programs often advance the idea that “religious” refers to the doctrinal and ritualistic practices of organized religion and “spiritual” refers to the personal pursuit of our own conception of God, higher power and even to that which signifies ultimate meaning and purpose, that religion is an institution based system of beliefs and spiritual is a personal belief system, and that the fellowship and Twelve Steps of A.A. are a spiritual—not a religious—program. It seems much is lost in making too much of a distinction between the two, not to mention the risk of pitting one against the other which can lead to confusion and disillusionment. Also lost in making this distinction is the fact that there is a rich spirituality inherent in many religions and particular to this project in Catholicism.

Historically, the Catholic Church in the United States has been actively engaged in addressing the problem of alcoholism and its spiritual casualties. As mentioned previously, Roman Catholics influenced the early members of A.A. and the development of the Twelve Steps. Since then, there has been a significant contribution of theological and pastoral reflection on issues of addiction and recovery. Contributions from Rev. John C. Ford, S.J., Father Ralph C. Pfau, Rev. Joseph Martin, S.S., Cardinal Justin Rigali as well as from Pope John Paul II, have helped shape a Catholic response that reinforces the insights of A.A. while simultaneously recognizing a specific theology. In the 1980’s and 90’s the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops worked to bring the issue of addiction to national consciousness by combining theological and pastoral reflection with contemporary clinical research. This work culminated in the 1990

pastoral message, *New Slavery, New Freedom* where they emphasize how alcoholism and addiction is an assault on the human dignity of the person.<sup>6</sup>

Reflecting on the spiritual dimension of addiction and recovery from a theologically grounded perspective that is rooted in an experience that is both subjective and objective takes nothing away from Twelve Step spirituality and is not in contradiction of it. Catholics, practicing and not, have imprinted upon them and made available to them a set of beliefs and principles richly grounded in Scripture and tradition. What is left unspecified and un-tethered in the spirituality of A.A. is greatly fortified when a specific and practical application of Catholic teachings and sacraments is made available.

Crises or, as they are commonly referred to in Twelve Step fellowship, “bottoms” are pivotal periods for people as they destabilize and test defenses and ego structures opening up possibilities for renewal. Religion does not sit idly by when it comes to choosing a path towards healing, renewal and wholeness. Religion provides guidance about where to go and how to get there. Thoughts, feelings, actions, and relationships are all a part of religious experience and for Catholics are also part of the Sacramental experience.

An addict at or near his ‘bottom’ is in psychic pain, and feels empty, desperate and demoralized. Addiction isolates and shuts people off from authentic human contact as well as church, faith and God. Addicts are human beings who are suffering, confused, isolated and desperately in need of access to resources that bridge their brokenness with the transforming mercy and power of God.

Catholics in treatment and recovery from addictions or the effects of addictions in their lives often have questions about how to understand the spiritual dimension of addiction and

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<sup>6</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops, “*New Slavery New Freedom: A Pastoral Message on Substance Abuse*,” (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1990).

recovery in light of their Catholic faith and practice. Catholics in treatment and recovery who have been long disconnected, both wittingly and not, from their faith and practice have few resources with which to be reminded of God's ever present call to return to him and accept his gift of life. Substantiating the human practices of the Twelve Steps with a spirituality tied to a specific theology, one where deeper truths are discovered, recalled, and embodied makes recovery possible because of divine grace and because of a recovering person's cooperation with grace.

Catholic spirituality is not one dimension of a person's life any more than it is one dimension of a person's recovery. It is the Christian life in its wholeness. Its fullness that can only be achieved by conforming to the person of Christ, in communion with God and others through the presence and the power of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ. The interaction of the human spirit with the Spirit of God is revealed and expressed in more than the subjective, it is revealed in objective forms such as scripture, tradition, liturgy, praxis, action, and contemplation of mysteries. Further, Catholic spirituality is at its very essence sacramental, the Incarnation of the Son of God makes this so.

A spiritual program un-tethered to the Eucharist, the "source and the summit" of Catholic spirituality, would naturally leave questions and yearnings. Baptism imprints upon our soul a spiritual mark bringing us, in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, into a "participation in the high priesthood of Christ." The spiritual mark has permanent ecclesial effect inextricably linking us with the one Spirit, one Lord and one Father.

The kind of conversion experience sought by those in recovery programs will find its fulfillment through the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. This sensibility neither precludes nor negates the spiritual practices and benefits of Twelve Step programs. Rather it

builds into the Twelve Step outline a distinctive Catholic imagination and sensibility that flows from participation in the life of the Church. Michael Downey writing about Catholic spirituality makes the point that Catholics generally have an incarnational spirituality. Meaning they have an appreciation for the fundamental goodness of God's creation and recognize the sacramental character of all of reality.<sup>7</sup> With some guidance, the spirituality of the Twelve Steps can be specified and concretized as God's grace is transmitted through created reality, as well as through the Church and its official sacraments.

I began this introduction with some background about Bill W. and the development of A.A. and the Twelve Steps, not just to contextualize this project but also to illuminate an example of how God's love intervenes on behalf of humanity through the Incarnation. In his story of having had a spiritual awakening, we can see how Bill W. himself was the recipient of God's merciful intervention. All human experiences make up God's path to us and invite us to respond to his self-gift. The human experience of addiction while not curable from a physical standpoint is restorable from a spiritual one if a primary emphasis is placed on one's relationship with God.

Twelve Step programs are a vital part of restoring one's relationship with God, others, and oneself in the context of recovery from addictions. For one who believes, especially for a Catholic, the name, the form, the texture of spiritual matters is not arbitrary. Neither of these realities is lost on a local parish priest, a Catholic spiritual director, or even on a Catholic who regularly attends Mass, participates in the Sacraments, and conforms as completely as possible to Christ. It may be lost, however, on spiritual care professionals working in treatment settings, on pastoral care professionals, and most importantly on Catholics who are in recovery programs

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Downey, *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 220.

seeking a spiritual solution to their problem with little awareness of how to integrate their religious belief and practice into working the Twelve Steps. Further, Catholics who have fallen away from the Church and turned away from God are often unsure of how to make their way back.

Thus, the purpose of this Doctor of Ministry project is to develop a catechetical program for Catholics in recovery from addictions that roots the spiritual dimension of recovery in Christian spirituality and guides the integration of the renewing and transforming power of the sacraments with the therapeutic value of Twelve Step recovery programs.

In the next chapter, I will provide a perspective about the relationship between spirituality, addiction and recovery. I will also discuss Twelve Step spirituality in particular and review the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps themselves. The primary resource for this chapter will be the *Big Book* of A.A. Additional resources will include the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *A Program for You: A Guide to the Big Book's Design for Living*, and other A.A. approved literature.

Chapter Three will provide the theological foundation for the project as it examines spirituality from a religious perspective. It will include a discussion about those aspects of Catholicism that are distinctly spiritual and will reflect specifically on the Liturgy, Sacraments and Prayer as specific experiences that deepen spirituality for a Catholic in recovery. For understanding the relationship of the Kingdom of God and the Church to the human experience, I will principally rely on the Vatican II document, *Gaudium et Spes*. *Lumen Gentium* will be used as a primary resource to articulate the Church as sacrament whose primary purpose is inner union of men with God and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* will be used as a resource to articulate Church instruction on matters of spirituality.

The fourth chapter will describe the project's design and implementation including sections outlining the program to be presented. The fifth and final chapter will discuss a summation of the project's evaluation including outcomes as they relate to change and growth in a participant's understanding of how the Liturgy, Sacraments and prayer relate to the spiritual dimension of recovery.

## CHAPTER II

### Perspective on Spirituality, Addiction and Recovery

We all, addicted or not, have imprinted within us a deep desire for spiritual fulfillment. The Psalms are full of expressions of deep longing, thirsting, and yearning for God: “As the hind longs for the running waters, so my soul longs for you, O God. A thirst is my soul for God, the living God.”<sup>1</sup> “O God, you are my God whom I seek; for my flesh pines and my soul thirsts like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water.”<sup>2</sup> When this yearning goes unfulfilled it can leave a kind of void that some will seek external elements to fill. This is especially true for someone with a predilection for substance abuse. Much in the same way our physical systems are embodied with information and purpose, our spiritual instincts are embodied with a search for transcendence and communion.<sup>3</sup>

At the heart of the addictive process is a restless spirit that is seeking answers but has set off in the wrong direction to find them. The restlessness of the human heart is part of the fundamental structure of the human person and it points to the spiritual dimension of human existence. Spiritual struggles set the stage for addictions as substances offer a quasi-spiritual substitute. Alcohol, drugs, or sex become objects of allegiance replacing God—or at least filling the vacuum left by a kind of sacred loss that occurs when we turn away from God.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 42:1 (New American Bible).

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 63:1 (NAB).

<sup>3</sup> An important distinction can be made at this point for the purpose of this project. While the terms transcendence and communion are often used as universal terms regarding spirituality, in its religious sense spirituality refers to the relationship between the individual and God pursued in faith, hope and love. The Christian meaning of the terms is an even more particular specification of the religious meaning. I prefer S.M. Schneider’s definition of spirituality as “that particular, actualization of the capacity for self-transcendence that is constituted by the gift of the Holy Spirit which gives a relationship to God in Christ within the believing community.” Uses of these terms in this project are intended to reflect this meaning.

We are each born with a fundamental desire for God, a desire that is God-given, an outpouring of his own love for us. This desire fuels the yearning for wholeness, completion, to love and be loved and ultimately to move closer to the Source—God our Creator. Addictions turn this fundamental desire into an unwittingly antithetical quest:

If alienation is the antithesis of grace, if darkness contrasts with light, if control undermines care, if disease contradicts wholeness, if self-obsession hinders concern for others, and if death stands opposed to life, then *addiction represents the polar opposite of spirituality*. Whereas spirituality is grounded in truth, freedom, and detachment, addiction thrives on illusion, compulsion, and disordered attachments. Whereas spirituality ultimately represents a heart steeped in fidelity, courage and dedication, addiction represents the opposite: a heart dominated by obsessive thinking, anxious feelings, and life that is unmanageable.<sup>1</sup>

This quote is key to understanding the need for a spiritual solution to combating addiction. Chronic substance abuse assaults important human values, damages relatedness to self and others, distorts reason, and diminishes one's ability to discern and act in accord with God's design. Deflation and humiliation, certain byproducts of an addictive grip, prepare humans for God's interventions just as deflation and humiliation did for Christ.

In the early stages of abusing substances alcoholics or addicts learn what the substance does for them, they learn they can control feelings, and they begin to form an attachment to the substance that over time will supersede all other attachments. In a progressive way, from a few years for some to decades for others, the abuse of the substance becomes an organizing principle in their lives to the exclusion of meaningful connections and purposeful activity. The self moves to the center of one's being, the substance is idealized and denial and repression become routine forms of coping. The conscious mind studiously ignores or rejects increasingly destructive patterns of thinking and behaving. The body sends alarm signals to the brain calling for more of

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Downey, *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 5.

the substance despite growing evidence of physical deterioration. The individual goes from living and using to living to use and eventually using to live.

At this later stage the addict begins to experience a multiple estrangement from his body, his cognition, his feelings and values, his family and friends, his community, and ultimately from God. Gerald May, a preeminent voice on spirituality and addictions, calls addiction “the most powerful psychic enemy of humanity’s desire for God.”<sup>2</sup> Ironically, estrangement due to alcoholism and addiction is particularly illusory as the antidote for an active user seems to be more of the substance, which only deepens the void or gap between him and meaningful connection. Over time, the drug itself becomes the primary connection making all other people, places, events, or things seem less meaningful and inconsequential.

In the 1990 pastoral document, *New Slavery, New Freedom*, the USCCB characterized the devastation of chemical dependency “as a direct assault on the dignity of the human person...and a perversion of God’s creative plan for us.”<sup>3</sup> As individuals created in God’s own image we are intended to share in God’s freedom, love and happiness, when physically, mentally, and spiritually enslaved by alcohol and drugs we are in a contrary condition to our Creator’s intention. The document goes on to describe the spiritual condition of addiction in this way:

In many ways, the spiritual symptoms of abuse and addiction reveal most poignantly the human devastation from chemical dependency. Rather than making themselves happy, dependent persons enter a world of lonely isolation, seeing their surroundings as increasingly hostile. Their reality is devoid of a caring God; they feel dominated by forces of evil. To protect their dependency, they lie to themselves and to their loved ones. They deny the evil eroding their bodies, minds and character, and often blame others for a host of imagined wrongs, including their drug abuse. The chemical abuser’s

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<sup>2</sup>Gerald May, *Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addictions* (Harper Collins: New York 1988), 3.

<sup>3</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *New Slavery New Freedom: A Pastoral Message on Substance Abuse*, 392.

self-worth is often reduced to nothing; and even the possibility of change, recovery, treatment and rehabilitation is overwhelmed by hopelessness, alienation and spiritual starvation.<sup>4</sup>

This aptly describes the fundamental trap of addiction, which is that addicts are people in dire need of a relationship with God but substitute fulfilling this need with self-destructive behaviors.

The habitual use of substances inevitably becomes unmanageable as it abuses people's freedom and compels them to do things they promised themselves and others they would no longer do. Lyn Brakeman, a pastoral counselor and spiritual director who has written on the subject of a theology of addiction, calls addiction a "not-God state," by which she means "a state of being out of touch with the holy, the mysterious font of grace that translates experientially into the feeling of being fully known and fully loved at the same time, both inside and outside oneself."<sup>5</sup> In the face of such a spirit depriving condition there can be only one solution, described in the Big Book as follows:

*There is a solution:* When, therefore, we were approached by those to whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences\* which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way, which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us, which

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Lyn Brakeman, "By Love Possessed," in *Addiction and Spirituality: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, ed. Oliver Morgan and J Merle Jordan. (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 196.

\* In the Big Book the reader is referred to Appendix II where the term spiritual experience is clarified as: "Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James called the 'educational variety' because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about himself alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource, which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves. Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it 'God-consciousness.'"

we could never do by ourselves.<sup>6</sup>

As mentioned in the introduction, A.A. and Twelve Step programs leave it to individuals to identify, define, name, or not name their higher power or God of their understanding. The solution to the problem of addiction has at its core a deep and effective spiritual experience, one whereupon God enters one's heart and life in a powerful and transforming way.

### *Concept of Higher Power*

At the core of Twelve Step spirituality is a relationship with God. This relationship has a transformative effect that is reflected not only in sustainable sobriety but also in diminishing emotional and psychological difficulties. Thus, a person entering recovery whether via a formal treatment program or attendance at a Twelve Step meeting will be introduced to the concept of higher power and encouraged to identify one. A rather rudimentary outline for initiating the identification of a higher power is that one's conception include the following three elements as a minimum standard: 1) it is not me; 2) it is more powerful than me; 3) it wants to help me.

The A.A. Big Book contains specific commentary that fleshes out a more meaningful way to consider what Bill W. and others had in mind with regards to higher power. There are two paragraphs in chapter four titled "*We Agnostics*," and these capture what was intended by 'higher power.' It is widely accepted that these two paragraphs are probably the most important in the whole book because they show exactly where one's higher power dwells and where to find it. The first paragraph states; "Whether we choose to call it creator, spirit of the universe, presence, father of light, conscience, our inner intelligence, supreme being or God we all have a fundamental awareness of something greater than our individual selves."<sup>7</sup> The second of the two

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<sup>6</sup> Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. (New York: A.A. World Services, 2001), 25.

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 46.

goes on to conclude that if it is true that God dwells within each human being, then each of us has our own personal God of our understanding or higher power and he can be found “dwelling within us.” Therefore, a recovering person does not necessarily need to believe in God, only believe that there is something greater that exists, however they choose to define that something and further, that the capacity to recognize it is innate in us all.

In the Big Book guide, *A Program for You*, the authors articulate higher power as something larger and more powerful than we are rather than as “a tall, elderly gentleman hanging around in the sky with a golden halo,” as God is typically imagined in adolescence. The guide posits that however we choose to conceptualize it, there is something greater than ourselves that has been there all of our lives and throughout the lives of everyone on the planet.

Other conceptions that spiritual care professionals typically offer to newcomers to recovery include nature, the A.A. fellowship, and perhaps even the love one has for their children. As long as the conception meets those minimum standards mentioned above of “not being me,” of “being more powerful than me,” and that “it cares and wants to help me,” it is thought to work.

### *“Working the Program”*

If at the core of Twelve Step spirituality is a relationship with a higher power, then how to go about improving the quality of that relationship becomes a central focus for the recovering person. The primary way this is accomplished in Twelve Step spirituality is by “working the steps,” meaning the study and practice of the principles, which are spiritual in nature, contained in each of the steps. As reflected in the Big Book, the solution to the disease of alcoholism is the spiritual awakening that comes from working the Twelve Steps as they reflect the very specific process that Bill W. and those around him engaged in to bring about this solution.

The Twelve Steps are not a set of exercises but rather describe the natural process one must go through in order to recover. I use the term ‘natural process’ to be clear that the Steps do not describe a psychological or medical theory and they are not a set of cognitive behavioral exercises. They instead describe in a simple and organized way what occurred when Bill W. and friends acted upon some rather undeniable realities and engaged in a particular set of spiritually based practices. They realized and admitted the powerlessness and the unmanageability of their lives. They came to the realization that something greater than themselves did for them what they could not. They humbly decided to forego their own will for that of their higher power. They took personal stock of their lives and defects of character and then admitted them to themselves, another and God. They got ready to have those defects removed and formally asked this of their higher power. They listed wrongs they had committed and made amends where possible in order to restore relationships with others and they continued to take personal inventory of their lives. Finally, they sought through prayer and meditation to improve their conscious contact with their higher power and then they carried their message to others.

Bill W. and friends did not have a Big Book, nor did they have a codified plan for how to bring about the psychic change needed to arrest their disease. Critical to their success and to those who have come after them is their relationship with a higher power – it was present in each of their stories and remains a fact of countless alcoholics in recovery today. The Steps illuminate for recovering persons the barriers to this relationship and the path to restoring this relationship.

### *The Twelve Steps and Spirituality*

The Twelve Steps comprise of a program not only for getting and staying sober but also for living. They embody time tested spiritual principles that even in their simplicity offer the solution to life’s most complicated problems. They prepare the recovering person for a life

without substances and give back far more than is lost with abstinence. The spirituality of the Twelve Steps of A.A. promote a positive self-image, an increasing capacity for tolerance towards self and others, improved relationships, and ultimately strive to engender a sense of connectedness with God and with all.

The beauty of the Twelve Steps lies in their spiritual foundation, in their practicality, and in their adaptability to a person's existing belief system. A close look at the Twelve Steps reveals how they were carefully thought out and how each word was chosen with skill and precision. The Steps are written in the past tense as they share the experiences of those who have gone before and offer an ongoing guide for recovery. They follow a particular sequence of information and action and are sequential, progressive and cumulative.

The Steps also contain a particular methodology aimed at interrupting self-deceptive thought patterns and fostering spiritual development. They begin with the idea that in order to solve a problem you first have to identify what the problem is. Though this may sound simple, it is based on the logical premise that the more thoroughly understood the problem is the more thoroughly understood the solution is. Once the problem is identified and the solution to that problem is revealed then what is left is determining the action necessary to bring about that solution.

The Twelve Steps follow precisely this logic. The problem is identified in Step One. The solution is identified in Step Two and Steps Three through Twelve describe the plan of action to bring about the solution. Simply stated, the Big Book and the Twelve Steps look at three things: 1) powerlessness; 2) power; and, 3) finding that power. These three things ultimately frame three stages of recovery and encompass what Bill W. and the first 100 or so recovering alcoholics did to recover from their disease.

The first three Steps suggest that human resources, such as intelligence, knowledge, strength, and even hope, are not enough. To recover, one must accept the help of a Power greater than oneself to guide his or her thoughts and actions. Steps One, Two and Three show people how to bring that Power into their lives. Step Four suggests the first action to bring about the solution identified in Step Two. This action gets reinforced by Step Five, Six and Seven, which point the way to overcome the personal faults or character defects that have caused so many problems. Steps Eight and Nine call for further action through specific corrections aimed at relieving the burdens of guilt and confusion. Step Ten continues the effort begun in Step Four – to seek out and work to rid oneself of shortcomings. Step Eleven urges conscious contact with a Higher Power through prayer and meditation. Lastly, Step Twelve suggests the need to practice the principles of the previous Eleven Steps in all one's affairs, and to share one's spiritual growth with others.

In the foreword to the book, *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, the Twelve Steps are described as a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole. Below, I will discuss how each of the Twelve Steps aims at bringing about transformation from active addiction to sustainable recovery and the spiritual principles to be practiced to do so.

*Step One: Honesty*

*We admitted we were powerless over alcohol [and other drugs] –  
that our lives had become unmanageable.*

In making the admission of powerlessness the first spiritual principle is revealed – honesty. Alcoholics and addicts often experience a significant sense of relief when they learn that freedom from drugs and alcohol does not spring from self-control and willpower, but from an admission of powerlessness. They are realizing that anything that comes from their own

resources – will, effort, philosophy, morality, goals, or good intentions – will not solve the problem.<sup>8</sup> Recognizing that human resources alone simply are not sufficient is the foundation for recovery – this is the key that unlocks the door to sobriety.

Step One defines the problem of alcoholism and addiction as a lack of power resulting from an illness of the body and an illness of the mind. The ‘illness of the body’ describes what Dr. William Silkworth in the introduction to the Big Book called an “allergy to alcohol.”<sup>9</sup> More clearly stated, it refers to the abnormal reaction an alcoholic has to alcohol including the experience of craving. The term abnormal used here does not mean to imply ‘bad’ or ‘wrong’ just that it is different from what most people experience. For example, rather than feeling less in control after a few drinks as most people do, an alcoholic feels more in control and when most people feel the effect of alcohol or drugs they are ready and able to stop, particularly if it has caused them some unintended consequence.

When an alcoholic feels the effect of alcohol they want to keep drinking and eventually come to a point where they cannot stop. At some point, usually after two or three drinks a cycle of physical craving sets in and once in motion the body takes over and the mind is no longer in control. This is also what differentiates a normal drinker from an abnormal drinker as the more they crave the more they drink - and the more they drink the more they crave. Many alcoholics attempt to solve the problem of drinking by changing what they drink, which avails them of nothing by way of control. This illness of the body results in the conclusion “I cannot drink or use,” because of an inability to stop on one’s own volition.

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<sup>8</sup> Anonymous, *A Program for You: A Guide to the Big Book’s Design for Living*. (Center City, MN: Hazelden Foundation, 1991), 56.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Silkworth wrote the introduction to the Big Book titled “The Doctors Opinion.” He worked with alcoholics in the 1930’s and discovered that both the body and the mind of the alcoholic are abnormal. This is the first direct reference in medical parlance to the fact that both the body and mind are affected in the condition of alcoholism.

“Illness of the mind” refers to the obsession with the substance, that ever present gnawing that keeps the substance at the center of one’s thoughts, plans, and activities. This results in the conclusion that “I cannot quit,” because the idea of drinking or using comes to overshadow or overcome all other ideas. If the physical craving is set in motion once the substance is already in the system, then whatever it is that makes a person take that first drink or drug must be in their mind.

Alcoholics and addicts use substances because they like the way it makes them feel. Any occasion can produce the idea to drink, happy occasions, sad occasions, after a while it makes no difference. The mind recalls what the substance does for them and does this to the exclusion of the consequences it also inevitably leads to. These four words –cannot use and cannot quit –are the essence of addiction because if you cannot drink or use because of what happens in your body and you cannot quit because of what happens in your mind, then you are powerless.

*Step Two: Hope*

*Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

Step Two is a critical follow up to Step One as it identifies what it is that will restore sanity, and makes it clear that it is not one’s own inner strength, will power or determination or any other human attribute as none of these are enough. In order to be restored, nothing less than a higher power or power greater than oneself can accomplish it. Step Two contains the spiritual principle of hope as it marks the nascent beginnings of a process towards restoration. Step Two does not say what the “power” is, however, in using the phrase “greater than ourselves,” it suggests it is not another human being. From what is understood from the Big Book however, it was meant to be something on the order of God.

In recovery, Step Two is considered a cornerstone laid upon the foundation that is set in Step One. In Step One an addict becomes willing to change, in Step Two they are coming to believe that change is possible. The authors of the Twelve Steps thought that belief came before purposeful action and further that in effect, the seed of those actions is belief. The Steps that follow are most favorably achieved when the recovering person believes not only in the possibility of change but also in the possibility of a power that can make that change happen.

A recovering person learns the simple axiom that if the problem is powerlessness then the solution is power. The second chapter of the Big Book of A.A. describes the solution as a “spiritual experience” that brings about a “profound psychic change.” Step Two itself does not produce that change, rather it identifies who or what has the power to produce that change. The early members of A.A. found that they experienced psychic change as the result of having had spiritual experiences. The psychologist Carl Jung wrote to Bill W. about his own experiences in working with alcoholics and reportedly said that “alcoholism is a spiritual disease at the root of which is the instinct or drive for wholeness.” With regards to one patient in particular he wrote the following:

His craving for alcohol was the equivalent on a low level of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in medieval language: the union with God. [In his letter Jung footnoted Psalm 42, 1] “as the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee O’ God.”<sup>10</sup>

Jung would find through his work that the mind of a chronic alcoholic could only be healed through a vital spiritual experience.

Reference to “sanity” in this Step means wholeness of mind based on the premise that if one’s mind is less than whole, then it cannot always see the truth. Restored sanity means no longer

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<sup>10</sup> Dr. Carl Jung’s Letter to Bill Wilson, January 30<sup>th</sup> 1961. [www.silkworth.net/A.A.history/carljung](http://www.silkworth.net/A.A.history/carljung), (accessed December 28, 2014).

acting on the lie that you have the power or ability to drink or use in a controlled way. It means a return to healthy living, and a return to emotional and mental health. After the initial relief that comes from the admission of the problem in Step One, recovering persons tend to feel overwhelmed as they begin to come to terms with the many losses caused by the addiction. Life without substances and the challenges ahead can seem insurmountable. Millions have discovered however that with an accurate description of the problem and an accurate description of the solution, and a workable plan of action described in the next ten Steps that nothing is hopeless and nothing is insurmountable.

*Step Three: Surrender*

*Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to  
the care of God as we understood Him.*

The *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* describes Step Three as being like the “opening of a door which to all appearances is still closed and locked except all you need is a key and the decision to swing the door open.”<sup>11</sup> For the alcoholic and addict, the will to make healthy choices suffers severe damage as it pulls the self into the center of one’s being and life. Bill W. and others discovered that selfishness and self-centeredness were the causes of their problems and further that they let self-will control their actions. Having come to believe back in Step Two in a power greater than ourselves, in Step Three a conscious decision is made to surrender to that power. Thus, the spiritual principle of Step Three is surrender.

People in A.A. understand both will and instinct as operating much the same as utilities in a house – when used properly and in the way they are intended they can make life smoother and more fulfilling. But left uncontrolled, they can create terrible damage. Step Three is a reminder that people can either flood their problems with willpower and determination, or they

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<sup>11</sup> A.A. World Services, *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, 34.

can choose to conform their will with God's and begin to use it rightly – when they do, they find life begins to cooperate with them.

Once someone has admitted powerlessness and has come to believe that a Power greater than themselves can restore them, they are then ready for Step Three where they make a “decision” to live in the solution. The use of the word decision was entirely intentional in this Step as it represents the essential link between understanding and action. The meaninglessness of decision without action rings especially true for alcoholics and addicts, many of whom spent years making decisions that they could not follow through with action. As I will include below, Steps Four through Nine describe the actions necessary to carry out the decision made in this Step.

*Step Four: Courage*

*Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

In order to surrender one's will and life it is necessary to clear the emotions and memories attached to past wrongs done to us and those done to others so a higher power can work more freely. It is also necessary in order to achieve and maintain spiritual fitness. The Fourth Step uses an awareness of negative emotions to get at the root cause of much of the trouble addicts find themselves in. The action of Step Four is to take a serious look at personal behavior, attitudes, and beliefs especially how they have contributed to the damage to relationships with self, others and God.

While actively using, the individual is not able to assess their assets and liabilities and therefore Step Four challenges someone to look directly at their character defects or personality characteristics. The recovering person does this through a detailed process called a “Fourth Step inventory” where they look back through their life and note any person against whom they

harbor any kind of ill feeling or resentment. The purpose is not to dredge up old pain but to rid oneself of it.

The inventory goes much further than that though. In it there are five parts: 1) A list of each person, idea or institution of which a resentment is held; 2) The reason(s) for the resentment; 3) What aspect of the ego was threatened in the injury, i.e. self-esteem; 4) What part or role one may have had in the injury; 5) Which of these character defects may have contributed to being in the position to be hurt. A completed inventory often reveals patterns of behavior, belief and attitude that have not only played a part in the pain caused by being wronged but also reveal how those traits have wronged others.

The collective wisdom in A.A. concludes that interrupting the use of alcohol or drugs is how one sobers up, but to truly recover, a determined effort to get at the causes and conditions underlying the drinking is necessary. Taking a Fourth Step inventory is a hard look at who an addict has been, who he is, and who he wants to be. The spiritual principle of Step Four is courage – courage to examine one's own nature.

*Step Five: Integrity*

*Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human  
being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

Step Five provides a way to stop living alone with the knowledge of the personal character defects that were discovered in Step Four. People who seriously make a searching and fearless moral inventory of themselves find things out that are often uncomfortable. Before they are able to change some of these areas of their lives, the knowledge of the past can build up emotional pressure. Step Five is a form of safety valve as it gives release of the torment of the past.

This Step is also a way to reduce the significant pain of loneliness that many people with addiction experience. It is an opportunity to start feeling that self-forgiveness is truly possible which in turn makes forgiveness of others possible. This Step is an opportunity finally to let go of years of pent up emotion and pain. The Fifth Step, and perhaps the harder of the two, takes the courageousness of Step Four one step further as it suggests admitting to God, oneself and another human the “exact nature of our wrongs.” The book the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* more explicitly draws out each of the Twelve Steps and has the following to say about Step Five:

“This practice of admitting one’s defects to another person is, of course, very ancient. It has been validated in every century, and it characterizes the lives of all spiritually centered and truly religious people.”<sup>12</sup>

“So far as alcoholics are concerned, A.A. would go even further. Most of us would declare that without fearless admission of our defects to another human being we could not stay sober. It seems plain that the grace of God will not enter to expel our destructive obsessions until we are willing to try this.”<sup>13</sup>

The authors had the foresight to know that alcoholics, not unlike many others, will rationalize that it is not necessary to actually admit to another person the nature of the wrongs they have done and point out that it should be done carefully and with someone from whom nothing is held back. It is recommended this Step be done with a Twelve Step sponsor or clergy person. In taking this Step and fearlessly holding nothing back, the spiritual principle of integrity emerges.

The Big Book says that many things can happen when someone tells their story in a Fifth Step such as: a lifting of the compulsion to drink; release and relief from feelings of guilt; loss of

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<sup>12</sup> Anonymous, *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, 56.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

fear; emergence from isolation and gaining the ability to begin to forgive others and oneself. It also says that many an A.A., once atheist or agnostic, report that it is during Step Five that they first felt the presence of God as they discover a compassionate God who understands and forgives. Fifth Steps are opportunities for either remembering or learning the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation.

*Step Six: Willingness*

*Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*

Once the Fifth Step is completed, the recovering person is ready for Step Six in which they acknowledge being “entirely ready” to have their higher power remove the defects of character identified in Step Four. Taking a moral inventory and sharing it with another person begins to open up a path for restored relationship with God and with others. Like the Fourth and Fifth Steps, the Sixth and Seventh are paired. In Step Six the recovering person gets ready to live in the decision made in Step Three, turning their lives and will over to the care of their higher power.

The wisdom of Step Six lies in the fact that seeing the need for change, wanting to change and even having the courage to change does not make one able to change, at least on their own. Step Six is really about accepting faults and limitations and then allowing desire for changing them to cooperate with a higher power’s desire to give new life. Willingness is the spiritual principle of Step Six as it brings the recovering person into partnership with the one who can affect the change and ultimately free them from the bondage of their addiction.

Many recovering folks struggle with how to work a Sixth Step. They often feel as if they should be “doing something.” In Step Six the recovering person looks at their Fourth Step inventory and become willing to act differently, not that they suddenly begin to act differently,

but that they be willing to. To be entirely ready here is an act of faith – asking God to change them without knowing just how they will be changed or what they will be like. It is also saying “I am willing to be my highest self, the self God wants me to be.”

*Step Seven: Humility*

*Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*

Beginning this Step with “humbly” immediately connects it to each of the previous Steps and also reflects the spiritual transformation that has taken place up to this point. In Step One, though it may be limited and somewhat more akin to humiliation, it is through humility that a recovering person accepts their powerlessness. In Step Two, it is humility that enables the recovering person to look beyond him or herself for that power. In Step three humility contributes to surrendering one’s will. Steps Four and Five take a great deal of humility in order to see one’s defects of character and to honestly share those with another and a higher power. In Step Six it is humility that enables someone to accept just who they are.

The *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* states that the “attainment of greater humility is the foundation [sic] principle of each of the Twelve Steps for without some degree of it no alcoholic can stay sober.”<sup>14</sup> Humility allows the recovering person not only to see the truth but also to live with that truth. Through the process of learning more about humility, a profound change in attitude toward God begins to take shape. “If that degree of humility could enable us to find the grace by which such a deadly obsession could be banished, then there must be hope of the same result respecting any other problem we could possibly have.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, if you

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

came to believe that your higher power can restore you to sanity in Step Two then you can come to believe that this same higher power can restore your character.

Another important feature of Step Seven is how, along with Steps Five and Six, the recovering person is guided through a process of removing obstacles to his relationship with others and his higher power. This is evident in the Seventh Step prayer:

My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your abiding. Amen.<sup>16</sup>

It is essentially saying, I have to become willing to see myself and be seen as myself. I have come to know that I, myself, cannot change who I am but I do desire change and know who can effect that change. I know that if I do not change, my relationships will not change and finally I recognize that I need strength to live according to the will of my higher power.

One more feature of this important Step is the word “asked.” The spirituality of this Step includes an awareness that our creator, higher power, God of our understanding, does not force his way into our lives. We have to ask him. The Twelve Step conception of higher power includes a power that grants us both the freedom to stray away from him and the freedom to return but is conditional on our approaching him.

#### *Step Eight: Brotherly Love*

*Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*

Now that a recovering person is on their way to a restored relationship with their higher power and themselves, in Steps Eight and Nine they become more intentional about restoring relationships with others. Here, in another pairing of Steps, the recovering person prepares in

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<sup>16</sup> Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 76.

Step Eight for what he will do in Step Nine. Bill W. thought that no other exercise can be more useful to improving relationships with others than to write out a detailed list of persons harmed and then to be willing to make amends to them. To live into “the new adventure of living with peace, partnership and brotherhood,” an addict must first backtrack and make an “accurate and unsparing survey of the human wreckage he has left in his wake.”<sup>17</sup> The list includes all the people, businesses, institutions and organizations harmed. Much of what will be included in Step Eight has already been identified in the moral inventory of Step Four. The spiritual principle of Step Eight is brotherly love as it opens up honest communication and opens the door to forgiveness both given and received.

Once the list is complete, the recovering person then works on developing the willingness to begin the process of making the amends, one at a time, as God presents the opportunity. Here again the term “will” shows up. In the Third Step will is surrendered to a higher power and in Step Six we become ‘willing’ to have character defects removed. In Step Eight, recovery is again dependent on become willing to change, this time is becoming willing to change the attitudes and behaviors that harmed relationships with other. The Big Book makes a point of stating that if someone is not completely willing to make amends or is unable to or lacks the courage to, it suggests they pray to their higher power asking for willingness and courage, and to continue to pray until the willingness and courage come.

*Step Nine: Forgiveness*

*Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

After making a list of people harmed and having reflected on them in a meaningful way, in the Ninth Step, the person makes the amends where possible and appropriate. A Ninth Step

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

amends is very different than previous attempts to apologize or rectify harms done while under the influence. The spiritual principle in Step Nine is forgiveness as it endeavors to do more than momentarily repair a relationship it seeks to truly restore it. In sharp contrast to is informally known as the “hangover apology,” an amends has been thoughtfully considered with the guidance of a higher power and a sponsor. It is made forthrightly and generously without excessive remorse or self-flagellating. The point of this step is not to lighten the burden of the alcoholic at the expense of the other. The spirit of the Ninth Step is to take full responsibility for harms done and at the same time taking responsibility for the well-being of others.

An important aspect of this Step is to divide, with the help of a sponsor, those to whom the amends will be made into several categories. There are those to whom an amends ought to be made as soon as one is reasonably confident in maintaining one’s sobriety. There are those to whom only a partial amends can be made lest a more complete disclosure could cause the receiver or other people harm. For example, it is not recommended that a detailed account of infidelity be revealed to an unsuspecting spouse nor should a full disclosure to an employer be made if it will lead to the loss of a job and thus compromise the financial security of an alcoholic’s family. There are also those to whom the amends will never be made directly due to the nature of the situation. Lastly, there will be some persons for whom the action of making the amends should be deferred. This is typical of those about whom the recovering person may be experiencing an emotional conflict. In this case, the recovering person spends more time in prayer with their higher power and if necessary in consultation with a mental health professional.

*Step Ten: Perseverance*

*Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitting it.*

Step Ten puts the spiritual principles embodied in the first nine steps into daily practice and life overall. Working a Tenth Step means a continuous working of Steps Four through Nine on a daily basis for the rest of one's life. The recovering person continues to take personal inventory carefully watching for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear (Step Four). When these occur, they ask God to remove them (Steps Six and Seven), they discuss them with someone immediately (Step Five) and they make amends quickly if someone has been harmed (Steps Eight and Nine) and they ask their higher power on a daily basis how to serve his will instead of their own.<sup>18</sup> A continual working of a Tenth Step will yield a reduction in one's character defects over time and so perseverance is the spiritual principle within it.

By the time a recovering person is working a Tenth Step their interest in alcohol or drugs has receded and one's relationship with self, others and a higher power is significantly improved. Alcoholics and addicts are sufficiently aware, however, that if they fail to be vigilant in the practice of attending to their spiritual growth they are putting themselves at risk for a subtle return to old patterns of thinking and behaving. The Big Book addresses this point and immediately follows it with the simple, yet certain conviction that God has to be kept at the center of one's recovery.

It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. 'How can I best serve Thee-Thy will (not mine) be done.' These are thoughts,

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<sup>18</sup> Anonymous, *A Program for You: A Guide to the Big Book's Design for Living*, 157.

which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.<sup>19</sup>

The Big Book also reflects at this point on what to expect in terms of the “psychic change” deemed necessary to recover. It says that if someone is painstaking about working the first ten Steps that somewhere along the way they will realize that their obsession to drink has disappeared, in fact the very urge to drink has disappeared, and that they have found a new freedom and new happiness. It goes on to say that feelings of uselessness and self-pity that plagued their self-assessment will all but disappear and that they will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in others. Having worked these Steps, a recovering person’s whole attitude and outlook on life will change and they will suddenly realize that their higher power is doing for them what they could not do for themselves. These are referred to as the “promises” of Twelve Step recovery.

*Step Eleven: Spiritual Awareness*

*Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*

Having recovered spiritual, mental and physical health and continuously growing in character a recovering person is ready to consciously live a spiritual life. Bill W. wrote that having worked the previous ten Steps he came to recognize having developed a “God-conscious,” which he called for himself a “sixth sense.” He had the wisdom though to recognize that just having the conscious would not be enough – he needed to go further by means of taking some form of action.

Although he proclaimed to be no expert on prayer and meditation, Bill W. did know that being too vague in this Step would risk a temptation to align these with self-will rather than

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<sup>19</sup> Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 85.

God's will. In the Big Book, he then makes some specific suggestions about how to carry the vision of God's will into all of one's activities. He suggests praying at the beginning of the day "asking God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives." Then as any uncertainty is encountered throughout the day he suggests "asking God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or decision." And finally at retiring in the evening, he suggests a constructive review of the day identifying any instances of being resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid and then asking God for forgiveness and guidance as to any corrective measures that should be taken.<sup>20</sup>

Earlier in the Big Book, Bill W. wrote that every human being has a higher power dwelling within him – this power has "all knowledge" and is "all powerful." Step Eleven emphasizes being in partnership with that higher power within and always striving to strengthen the relationship through prayer and meditation. This conscious contact puts a recovering person in reach of the most vital resource he has – the knowledge and power of God as he understands him, so he may be able to deal with any set of circumstances that might arise.

*Step Twelve: Service*

*Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs*

The last chapter of the Big Book is dedicated solely to a discussion of this Step and in the very first paragraph Bill W. summarizes by stating: "When the Twelfth Step is seen in its full implication it is really talking about the kind of love that has no price tag on it."<sup>21</sup> In the phrase "no price tag on it," he means that the kind of love the entirety of the twelve steps embodies is a love freely given and freely received. This love is represented in the three parts of the Step: 1)

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 106.

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these step, we have allowed God to enter our heart and minds and as a result of his love have been transformed. 2) We carried the message of what this love makes possible and gave witness to God's transforming love because we wanted others to have what we have. 3) We expressed our love for this whole pattern of living by practicing the twelve spiritual principles in all our affairs.

Twelve Step spirituality defines spiritual awakening as "a personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism."<sup>22</sup> Bill W. described several things found in common with the variety of personal definitions of spiritual awakening from his contemporaries in recovery. Three such commonalities were: having become able to do, feel and believe that which could not be done on one's own strength and resources; having gained a new state of consciousness and being; and, feeling life is no longer a dead end but is now full of possibilities, to name a few.

"Carrying the message..." according to Bill W. is essential to keeping and growing in one's own spirituality. By "passing it on," one experiences the joy that comes from and nurtures one's own spiritual growth in the process. This dictum has proved incredibly successful as is evidenced by the proliferation of recovering alcoholics and addicts who followed the same path as Bill W. and friends. They have found that there is no better witness to the transforming power of the Twelve Steps than someone who has ascended them - a recovering alcoholic who has a stronger message of hope than anyone else.

The Twelfth Step also carries the wisdom that if recovering people continue to think, act and feel the same ways in other areas of their life, then eventually old ways of behaving will overwhelm their recovery and they will relapse. For example, if someone continues to lie, even

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 567.

about small things, then eventually they will return to lying to themselves. That self-deception will progress until someone has talked themselves into a return to their substance of choice. “Practicing these principles in all our affairs...,” is also a recognition that getting sober does not solve all of life’s problems. There indeed will be challenges ahead for the recovering person, whether it be related to a job or career, a relationship, or any number of calamities that will arise. None of these however, are more powerful than one’s higher power any more than alcohol and drugs were more powerful. By practicing these principles in all areas, one always has access to the ultimate power, God.

### *Prayer and Recovery*

People in Twelve Step programs believe deeply in utilizing the power of prayer to help them recover. A prayer, bringing the work of the Step in even closer contact with a higher power, complements each of the Twelve Steps. Recovery prayers make that vital connection between the specific vulnerability of the addict and the source of strength and comfort that can help them. For example, prayer in recovery is often used as a stress reliever, as a means to redirect thoughts from substances or situations that induce desire for substances, and as an aid to emotional regulation. The Serenity Prayer is a good example of this:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

This prayer has helped many alcoholics overcome troubled thinking including the urge to return to use of substances. It does so by expressing the following:

*“God...”*

Asking for the antidote to the distress.

*“grant me the serenity...”*

Surrendering the fantasy of omnipotence.

*“to accept the things I cannot change...”*

Asking for the content of character to do their part.

*“the courage to change the things I can...”*

And, acknowledging their vulnerability to false beliefs and instead place trust in their higher power above all others to provide truth.

*“and the wisdom to know the difference...”*

Prayer in recovery has the potential to affect not only psychological and emotional change but to effect transformation on a deep interior level. All prayer brings us into contact with God, but for the pressing needs of recovering persons, prayer is a vital and life altering action that can redirect their heart, mind and will away from the false promise of their substance while transforming them in deep and sustainable ways.

#### *Concluding Remarks*

A close look at the Steps reveals that they represent basic and universal spiritual truths. They represent the sum total of what worked for Bill W. and his friends and became a design for living conducive to an alcoholic's temperament. The Steps all include spiritual principles and have the aim of developing a relationship with God or a higher power. As previously stated, Twelve Step spirituality does not define who or what this God or higher power is, they do tell something about him or it. The Second Step tells us that God or higher power is a power, a force that is active in our lives and is greater than us. It tells us that this power does indeed exist and can actually do something – something we alone cannot. The Third Step tells us that this power cares, not just exists but cares about us specifically. The Fifth Step tells us that we can talk to him openly and honestly. The Sixth and Seventh Steps tell us that he can change us - if we ask him to. In the Eleventh Step we are told we can be engaged consciously with him and that we can ask for knowledge of his will and for the power to carry that will out. Catholic Spirituality

takes what the Steps tell us about God and his centrality to recovery and brings it further and in the next chapter I will discuss how it does so.

## CHAPTER III

### Spirituality for a Roman Catholic in Recovery

Catholic spirituality for the recovering person receives its focus and direction from the liturgy, sacraments and prayer and corresponds with and extends the spirituality of the Twelve Steps. Liturgy, sacraments and prayer are all expressions of conversion and are signs and causes of deepening conversion. These three fundamental realities are rooted in Catholic theology, are intrinsically interrelated, are at the heart of Christian living and reliably and tangibly return spirituality to its religious roots.<sup>1</sup> Whether consciously or not, working a Twelve Step program naturally brings a person of faith back in touch with their spiritual development as it brings God back to the center of their lives, reawakens a specific set of beliefs and sense memory and ultimately has the potential for deepening one's Catholic spirituality. In her book, *Seeds of Grace*, Sr. Molly Monahan (pseudonym) describes her experience:

Unlike those who say "I found spirituality in A.A., not religion," I feel blessed to have both in my life. I cannot separate them. My Catholicism is as much a part of my identity as is my alcoholism. It is the mother tongue of my soul, and the "language" of its creed, code, and cult (worship) articulate and give me ways to express the spirituality I find in A.A.<sup>2</sup>

And further,

A.A. has helped me grow spiritually, the seeds of its spirituality fell on the rich soil of the ancient Christian tradition in which I was raised. It is no doubt for these reasons that A.A. spirituality alone would never be enough for me, austere as it necessarily is, without signs or symbols or sacraments, without ritual or communal worship and without expression in the beauty of the art that attends those rituals and adorns places of worship.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kevin Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 311.

<sup>2</sup> Molly Monahan, *Seeds of Grace: A Nun's Reflections on the Spirituality of Alcoholics Anonymous* (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2002), Kindle edition, Loc. 1544.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Loc. 1557.

As Catholics, our personal experience of faith brings us into contact with the truths of revelation including that there is a loving God who is greater than we are. While we know this in our heart; we attend liturgy, we participate in the sacraments and we pray not just because of what they communicate about our belief in God, but also because of the realities they express. As Sr. Monahan suggests, our beliefs and practices articulate and express what we know to be true and without them spirituality is incomplete.

### **Returning Spirituality to Religion**

I have worked with many people who either have or had at one time a religiously rooted concept of God and who eventually were hindered in their recovery because they were not entirely sure how to move into a spirituality rooted in their faith. In personal communication with many of them, I learned one difficulty in particular was having “knowledge of” or “belief in” God but uncertainty as to how to delve deep enough to recognize the vital, intimate, deeply transforming relationship with God they are missing. For Catholics in recovery, the implication of a higher power “that can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves” is reflective of the divine communion between man and God. As *Gaudium et Spes* explains:

The root reason for human dignity lies in man’s call to communion with God. From the very circumstance of his origin man is already invited to converse with God. For man would not exist were he not created by God’s love and constantly preserved by it; and he cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and devotes himself to His Creator.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vatican Council II, “*Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World],” [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html) (accessed October 19, 2010), 19.

Belief in God and his ability to do for us what we cannot do alone is not simply a derivative of the human experience; it is given definition and is significantly substantiated by the religious experience.

Spirituality based in religion presupposes revelation, which is God's desire to be known by humans and to be known in the human experience. Thus, God's initiative is always prior to any human response. Faith in God, while it inescapably involves our personal decision and commitment, is not primarily a human endeavor; it is a response to God's invitation. The God in whom we believe is *the* source of meaning for our lives, and is *the* hope and comfort in the midst of suffering. As Christians, we are called to respond to God's own invitation in Jesus Christ to find in God our source of meaning, security, hope and vision.

In his spiritual autobiography, St. Augustine addresses the dynamic interaction between the human experience and God's initiative. In *Confessions* Augustine recounts his own misery, pain, and sense of isolation as he tries to deal with his own struggle to believe. The language he uses might well resonate with an alcoholic or drug addict in the depths of "hitting a bottom," an informal phrase addicts use to describe the state of complete desolation they experience when realizing they are powerless over their substance. Augustine describes his struggle as "misery dredged up from the secret recesses of my soul and heaped in full view of my heart," and as "a mighty storm within a mighty downpour of tears." Further, he expresses a sense of "intense isolation" though surrounded by many friends and confidants as he suffers in the ordeal alone.<sup>2</sup> Augustine writes of throwing himself on the ground under a tree and just allowing the tears to burst forth unable to control himself and his emotions.<sup>3</sup> At this point of desperation, he hears

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<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, Trans. Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 10. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Lennen, Ed., *An Introduction to Catholic Theology* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1998), 60.

children's voices which sound to him like "take and read." He picks up his Bible and reads and within a few sentences he calms and experiences "a light of serenity infused into his heart vanquishing the darkness of doubt." He concludes the description of this experience in Book 10 of *Confessions* with the seminal passage:

Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within me and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things, which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you, though if they did not have existence in you, they had no existence at all. You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I felt but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace, which is yours.<sup>4</sup>

Addiction to substances magnifies exponentially the restlessness of the human heart and at moments of desperation, when they are most attuned to it, their hearts are awakened to God's loving invitation. This loving invitation from God begins with an act of grace given purely as gift. With an open heart we are free to receive it, not as one of many options, but as fulfillment of our fundamental orientation.

In Chapter One of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Council reminds us that "wounded as it is by sin, man's freedom cannot fully realize its orientation towards God without the help of God's grace."<sup>5</sup> This is compatible with a fundamental principle of Twelve Step programs, which recognizes that addiction cannot be arrested by human will alone; in fact, attempts to do so only deepen the problem. Conversely, simply surrendering to the divine will does not arrest addiction either. Rather, as with the power of grace, when human will chooses to act in harmony with divine will, what was previously unattainable becomes possible. Therefore, through personal admission of a need or desire for help, accepting the need to surrender and by making the

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<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *Conf.* 10.27.

<sup>5</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1:17.

decision to turn towards God, one begins the journey of spiritual recovery. God has given us freedom, “where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom,”<sup>6</sup> freedom to share in the very life of God. This is the path out of misery.

### *Uniting Suffering with God*

I have been told by people in treatment that the closest they came to an authentic spiritual experience while drinking was when they “hit bottom.” In the depth of despair, defenses shaken loose, they sought God’s intervention and in return felt God’s presence. Suffering seems to evoke an inevitable vulnerability that often leads us to seek God for refuge, mercy and guidance and, when we do, we find an opportunity to make meaning of this suffering. When alcoholics and addicts “hit bottom” they have reached a point of such despair they often feel that all hope is lost until they somehow unite their suffering with God.

In his Apostolic Letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, Pope John Paul II calls us to discover the salvific meaning of suffering. “To suffer means to become particularly susceptible, particularly open to the working of the salvific powers of God, offered to humanity in Christ.”<sup>7</sup> When someone of the Catholic faith unites their suffering with God by turning towards him they discover a salvific love that begins to restore hope. They remember how Christ endures our sufferings and then reveals a divine love that saves, frees and redeems.

When we are stripped down and laid emotionally, mentally and most significantly, spiritually bare, our dependency on God is revealed in an intense and unequivocal way. The recognition of this dependence often expressed, as “I need help,” for many, can mark a

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<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. 3:17 (New American Bible).

<sup>7</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris* [Apostolic Letter on the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering], Vatican Website, February 11, 1984, sec. 23, accessed December 28, 2014, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john.../hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_11021984\\_salvifici-doloris.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john.../hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_salvifici-doloris.html).

significant turning point as it connects the addict with life inside himself. This connection is with God, who is life inside one's self and becomes the faint spark that signals hope for an end to the bondage of addiction. With this connection all other connections are now also possible.

The "spark" can also be conceptualized as an instinct of love breaking through, instigating a movement of the soul towards life. Addicts are good people with a kinship for life and an abiding instinct for love. This instinct has been hidden beneath the lies and deception of addictive thinking or behaving and despite this, the inherent goodness of the individual persists. When that breakthrough occurs it gives way to another kind of instinct, a supernatural instinct for faith - the spiritual sense of faith given to each believer in baptism that then must be cultivated within the life of the church. "Nothing is more apt to confirm our faith and hope than holding it fixed in our minds that nothing is impossible with God."<sup>8</sup> Once reason has grasped the idea of God's almighty power the journey of true restoration begins. A.A. makes an identical claim, "the central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous."<sup>9</sup>

### *The Kingdom of God*

In his goodness and wisdom, the God of our understanding chose to reveal himself and his plan "of loving goodness," in our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Out of love for us, God made it possible for us to know him, to know his will, to love him and to respond to him beyond our natural capacity, by sending us his beloved Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus, by revealing himself and giving himself to man, the God of our understanding has provided the definitive solution to the quest for wholeness and happiness for which man searches.

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<sup>8</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 274.

<sup>9</sup> *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 25.

The God in whom we believe is a God who meets this fundamental need of the addicted, and of all of us, for something greater than oneself. This God of our understanding calls us into communion or *koinonia* – a spiritual relationship. A relationship cultivated in the truths of the Catholic faith found embedded in Catholic spirituality and modeled in the messages of Jesus. Weakened by the powerful appeal of drugs and alcohol, the afflicted can trust Jesus to take them to the ultimate power, God the Father. Jesus, who laid down his life for his sheep, is a force that is not unknown to us. By his commitment to those whom God the Father has entrusted, those whose names he knows, we can trust him to do what we alone cannot.

Jesus brings God – not an ambiguous higher power – he brings God and “now we know His face, now we can call upon Him.”<sup>10</sup> Jesus also promises the Holy Spirit – again, this is not an ambiguous representation. When alienated from one’s true nature due to the effects of alcoholism, uniting this struggle with the cross of Jesus Christ, one can draw from his passion the strength, courage and hope to recover. With eyes fixed on his resurrection, the suffering can come to believe in a promise of mercy, redemption and the healing power of love. As revealed to us in Scripture, “There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.”<sup>11</sup>

At the core of Christian faith and Christian life is this paschal mystery, the saving reality of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The suffering and death of Jesus reveals the depth of God’s love for us and the tendency of man to reject God’s offer of salvation. The saving event of the resurrection makes manifest our destiny—in spite of sin and self-destruction; God has not abandoned his creation but in and through Christ has brought about its salvation. The risen

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<sup>10</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 44.

<sup>11</sup> Acts 4:8-12.

Christ, present in the hearts of believers through the Holy Spirit, carries the message of the Kingdom of God and reflects a God whose concern is mankind and whose coming rule means life and wholeness for people. Through his proclamations Jesus shows particular concern for the most vulnerable, the weak, and the suffering:

The Kingdom of God is the saving presence of God, active and encouraging, as it is affirmed or welcomed among men and women. It is a saving presence offered by God and freely accepted by men and women which takes concrete form above all in justice and peaceful relationships among individuals and peoples, in the disappearance of sickness, injustice and oppression, in the restoration to life of all that was dead and dying. The Kingdom of God is a changed new relationship of men and women to God, the tangible and visible side of which is a new type of liberating relationship among men and women within a reconciling society in a peaceful, natural environment.<sup>12</sup>

Just as the second of the Twelve Steps contains the spiritual principle of hope, the Kingdom of God proclaims and embodies this hope, and is present whenever God's power is making reconciliation and healing possible.

The Kingdom of God is also the liberating and redemptive presence of God, so often evident in Twelve Step meetings. If God's liberating and redemptive presence is manifested whenever people love one another, forgive one another, bear another's burdens, wherever people are of a humble heart, open to their Creator and serving their neighbor, then God's Kingdom is in operation in a significant way in the meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. The fact that the people gathered at these meetings also share the common bond of a desire to stop using substances creates an opportunity for sobriety that faith and religious practice alone typically cannot achieve. Conversely, without the tacit acknowledgement of the redemptive and transforming presence of the Kingdom of God, A.A. meetings likely would not have thrived and there would be no basis for the Twelve Steps. The success of A.A. in helping people get and

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<sup>12</sup> Robin Ryan CP, *God and The Mystery of Human Suffering: A Theological Conversation Across the Ages* (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), 224. Copy of quote from Edward Schillebeeckx book, *Church: The Human Story of God*, 111-12.

stay sober is a correlative of God's presence as the highest power that heals, renews, recreates, and gives life.

As previously mentioned, A.A. and the Twelve Step recovery programs do not specify who or what people must identify as their "higher power." Although spirituality always has a uniquely personal and special form, a spiritual life rooted in and within the church draws one into a spirituality that takes the believer through tragedy to beyond tragedy, by way of the cross to victory in the cross. As Catholics, "the God whom we worship takes the contradictions of human existence into Himself."<sup>13</sup> A personal relationship with God that fails to recognize this, risks a kind of ambiguity that may lack the modes of expression that this relationship includes. Thus, just 'any god' will not suffice; a person of faith knows and ultimately longs for a God of grace and love, revealed in creation and made manifest in Christ and in the Holy Spirit and cultivated in a sacramental church.

### *Spiritual Growth and the Church*

Bill W.'s sustained transformation came through a lifelong working of a spiritual program. For Christians, spiritual growth always happens in the context of the Church. Salvation does not come to us solely as individuals, rather we are redeemed into God's family and we grow together in faith as a family. The Church perpetuates Christ's saving mission to the world. It is both a sign and instrument of God's communion with humanity and union of all men, as the Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium*, makes clear:

Since the Church is Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner

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<sup>13</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Christian Church in a Secular Age." In *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses*, ed. Robert McAfee Brown, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 85.

nature and universal mission.<sup>14</sup>

The Council goes on to link this intention with the “present day conditions of the world” which add “greater urgency to this work of the Church so that all men, joined more closely today by various social, technical and cultural ties, might attain fuller unity in Christ.”<sup>15</sup> As a sign, the Church points the faithful toward union with God and as an instrument, the Church makes communion with God possible through the gifts given to her by Christ—God’s plan and activity revealed.

In the Old Testament there are a vast array of sacred signs and rituals that in some way convey the mystery of God. In the New Testament we see that seven of these became most important and the most authentic to Christians who saw within them Christ’s own dynamism. This was not arbitrary. “All of the basic grace-filled actions which we came to call the sacraments can be found in the New Testament, but they are not there in precise form and exact ritual, for the sacraments are not inventions but conclusions from what was found in the church’s tradition and scripture.”<sup>16</sup> The Church is not the institution that serves as the keeper of the sacraments rather the Church is itself the sacrament. It is a sign of Jesus himself, God’s visible self-disclosure, who left us in one form and assumed another. This is an important message to be conveyed to those Catholics who have fallen or turned away from the Church and who feel rudderless in an undefined spirituality.

The sacraments are the actions of the church, which is the action of Christ who is the act of the Father’s love. The Son’s humanity, by this same principle of the Incarnation, is extended

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<sup>14</sup>Vatican Council II, “*Lumen Gentium* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church],” sec. 1:1, accessed July 25, 2015, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist.../vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist.../vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html).

<sup>15</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

<sup>16</sup> William Bausch, *A New Look at the Sacraments* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1990), 4.

to the church and the church in turn acts visibly in the continuing incarnations of the sacraments.<sup>17</sup> The Church functions analogously to the seven liturgical sacraments as she leads us to share in God's life and union with Christ. The seven liturgical sacraments receive their power through the Church, which, rooted in the mystery of God, receives power from Christ. Further, each sacrament brings about a specific grace proper to its physical sign. As Catholics, we believe the Church is Christ's one and only instrument of salvation. He chose the 'ecclesia,' the assembly called together by God, to dispense the fullness of grace, which we receive through the teachings and sacraments brought forth in the life of the church.

### *The Liturgy and Spirituality*

In the spiritual life of a Christian, it is essential to have vital contact with Christ through the liturgical life of the Church.<sup>18</sup> The liturgical life of the church refers to the whole presentation of the "living word of God through Scripture, Tradition and the sacraments coming to a center of radiance in the Eucharist as presence, sacrament and mystical sacrifice."<sup>19</sup> The liturgical scholar, Msgr. Kevin Irwin, emphasizes the liturgy as the heart of all Christian spirituality as it is where we hear the voice of God and where we experience the mystery of God. Through worship we respond and through liturgical prayer we offer a communal response to "all that God has done for us in calling us to himself in Christ and in sanctifying us through the power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>20</sup> Msgr. Irwin explains that when we hear the voice of God "it comes in through the ears

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>18</sup> Benedict Groeshel, *Spiritual Passages: The Psychology of Spiritual Development* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2000), 28.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>20</sup> Kevin Irwin, *Liturgy, Prayer and Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 25.

and goes straight to the heart.”<sup>21</sup> Further, that the liturgy provides fortification for a spiritual transformation, as it is our recognition as Catholics of God’s bursting into our lives: *Lex Orandi Lex Credendi* (how we pray tells us what we believe).

In Sacred Liturgy we encounter God through Jesus Christ and through active participation we encounter Christ’s saving action as we are touched, nourished and healed like nowhere else as the visible signs and rituals arouse God’s divine action unfolding in and through human life.<sup>22</sup> Because it engages the whole person and encounters that person in their present state of physical, mental and spiritual being, the liturgy has great potential to transform as it both instructs and expresses what we believe.

The sounds, smells, and sights of liturgy profoundly affect our inner emotional, psychic and spiritual lives. We do not just give voice to our belief that the Cross of Christ is a sign of salvation we participate again and again in that salvific event. The liturgy presents us with God’s offer of divine relationship and to that offer we are asked to respond. Msgr., Irwin describes it in this way:

Christian worship provides us with a clear illustration of searching for and being sought by God, for in the act of worship we both speak to God and listen to his word, we join in the self-offering of Christ and receive holy gifts signifying his presence with us, we sing in joyful acclamation to the Lord our God and find ourselves confounded and humbled at the forgiveness and love granted us by the Lord we worship. Worship involves doing, acting, and symbolizing on our part, but this doing is based on what God has done and does in our lives, how God has acted and acts in our world, and which symbols God has used and uses to communicate his love for us. Christian worship is our response to the profound mystery of God’s seeking us so that we might share the very life of God in the community of the Church.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kevin Irwin, “*Liturgy and Sacraments*” Class Lecture, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., Spring 1997.

<sup>22</sup> Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, “Liturgy, Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church,” in *Sacred Liturgy: The Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church*, edited by Alcuin Reid (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2013), Kindle ed. Loc. 75.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

Additionally, there are educative and pastoral elements in the liturgy that provide a rich spiritual sustenance. Through readings, prayers, hymns, and actions we encounter visible signs, which the sacred liturgy uses to signify invisible divine things and when we participate in it the Holy Spirit, given to the Church by the risen Lord, opens our hearts and minds. When we process into the liturgical celebration following the Cross, we follow the way of Jesus, taking the path illuminated by the Book of Gospels and we move towards salvation which awaits us on the altar, which the Eucharist makes present to us in the here and now.

In the liturgy we make a physical gesture reminding us specifically of the bodily gift of Christ on the Cross. We identify specifically in whose name we make this sign and in whom we profess our faith: “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” The celebrant expresses a prayer for the presence of Christ in the assembled faithful and of the reality that Christ is coming to us: “The Lord be with you.” We respond expressing what we know and we believe highlighting the power of the Spirit entrusted the priest in Holy Orders, “and with your spirit.”

In the liturgy something is happening, in the form of the rituals embodied within it, we are taken out of ourselves and beyond ourselves as God has concentrated the entirety of his saving love for the world into the ritual action and words of the Eucharistic liturgy.<sup>24</sup> In every element of the liturgy, God is acting and providing ways for us to respond. These are not ideas or notions of God’s action and our response, it is action, it is encounter, and in the liturgy our response is in a form adequate to what the ritual has delivered; namely God’s saving action.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, *What Happens at Mass* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2005), v.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, vi.

In the Mass there are two major parts that draw us into deeper relationship with the God of our understanding, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In *Dei Verbum*, the Second Vatican Council explains an inseparability of the two:

God reveals Himself and His plan for our salvation to us in both words and deeds. The words explain the deeds, and the deeds give proof of the words. The mystery of divine revelation is made present in every Mass. In the Liturgy of the Word, God speaks to us, giving Himself to us in word; in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, God acts for us, giving Himself to us in deed.<sup>26</sup>

To hear the sacred Word is not the same as hearing other words or a reflection of a bygone event in history – it is the event anew just as are all other events in the economy of salvation. When people in recovery attend Twelve Step meetings, they actively listen to the stories of other recovering addicts and in them hear their own story or a fragment of their own story. In the liturgy, when we actively listen to the Word and also search for the connection between the pattern of our life and biblical patterns we discover the meaning of our own personal existence and the community's existence which cannot be understood apart from the sacred text. The reading is God's promises fulfilled in Christ – this sinks into our hearts and minds, happening then and happening now.

In the Liturgy of the Word, God has revealed something to us and invites our faithful response. The Profession of Faith that follows the Homily is the response by the gathered, succinctly expressing Catholic belief. In both the Nicene and Apostles Creed we profess belief not in an idea of God, but belief in the Father: “almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible;” belief in the Son: “the only Begotten Son of God;” belief in the Holy Spirit: “who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored

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<sup>26</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, 2.

and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.” We also profess belief in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church - the context in which the divine life of the Trinity is shared.

In the Eucharistic celebration, the saving event of Christ’s sacrifice is occurring in our midst. “God’s word to us is Jesus Christ, and not just vaguely Jesus Christ but Jesus Christ above all in the action of his Paschal Mystery.<sup>27</sup> God’s word is articulated to us in the syllables and words and phrases of bread and wine transformed.

Reception of the Holy Communion completes what began with the initial bringing forth of the gifts, the bread and wine that were brought forward and handed over to Christ in the hands of the priest are now transformed and handed back to us. More meaningfully, the lives we brought forward are handed back completely transfigured and transformed. As we contemplate the entire mystery of the event that just took place, “the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me,”<sup>28</sup> a profoundly intimate and personal conversion in our hearts takes place.

Embedded in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of A.A. is this theme of “sacrificial spirit,” of giving something up to get something more worthy. Recovering people have to give up more than their substances. To truly transform their lives and themselves, they have to give themselves and their former lives over to God –sacrificing one existence for another. The Eucharist is the greatest and most profound event of transformation as Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice of one existence for another – when we take communion we too give up one existence for another and are transformed.

The Communion Rite concludes with the Prayer after Communion which is a prayer on our behalf by the priest, that the communion we just received brings us spiritual strength and

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<sup>27</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Gal. 2:20 (New American Bible).

growth in holiness to which we respond, “Amen.” The Concluding Rite signals the Mass is ended and includes a final blessing and a dismissal that serves as a reminder to live out our call “to go in peace...” to be the bread for the world.

To deepen our relationship with God we have to experience him. The liturgy is that foundational experience that deepens our relationship with God through Jesus. In it, God the Father moves to the world and the world moves towards God the Father. This is not vague or abstract, God concretely and specifically gives himself to the world in the giving of his Son and he does so very specifically in and through the Church and very specifically the assembled (representing the world) respond in thanksgiving and praise to God in the Church.

### *The Sacraments and Spirituality*

As I have discussed, Christian spirituality is a sharing in the mystery of Christ, thus the sacraments are instruments of the divine power of Christ, effecting grace in the recipient through the merits of his passion and death. The sacraments are signs or symbols that actually effect what they signify, and what they signify constitutes the reality of the life of grace.<sup>29</sup> It is in the Church, the mystical body of Christ, that “the life of Christ is communicated to all those who believe and who, through the sacraments are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his passion and glorification.”<sup>30</sup> Sacraments are therefore specific ways of participating in the mystery of Christ and as such correspond to specific needs in the Christian life, which are signified by the matter and form of the sacrament.

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<sup>29</sup> Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, Inc., 1987), 209.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy specifies that the purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify people, to build up the body of Christ, and finally to give worship to God.<sup>31</sup> The sacraments have a very practical orientation in life. The sacraments of baptism and initiation represent the rich spiritual resources that reside within the individual. The Holy Eucharist unites us with Christ and is sign of the unity of the people of God. The Sacrament of Reconciliation brings us into contact with the boundless mercy of God. Significant to this project, the sacraments put us in living contact with Christ and are efficacious signs of God's desire to touch and transform us and through them God does so. As Augustine taught us, they are "outward signs of an inward and spiritual grace."<sup>32</sup> Through them God affirms and build us up to engage in life's most significant transitions.

The significance of the sacraments to the spiritual dimension of the transition from the darkness and desolation of addiction to the hope and renewal of recovery cannot be overstated. The sacraments are not mere ritualization's of historical events but rather are deeply personal, active encounters with the Risen Lord in the present. These encounters with the liberating love of Christ, made present and real in the experience of the person of faith are a source of healing and sanctification. They are formative and transformative of the inner life of a Christian.

### *The Holy Eucharist*

A distinctly Catholic spirituality flows from the Eucharist as its source and summit wherein the dynamic presence of Christ reaches out to us, meets us and draws us closer to him filling us up with his love. In return, with God's grace and of our own free will, we offer

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<sup>31</sup> Vatican Council II, "*Sacrosanctum Concilium* [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy]," Ch. III. Sec. 59., accessed August 30, 2015, [www.vatican.va/.../hist.../vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/.../hist.../vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html).

<sup>32</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 1131.

ourselves back to God. *Lumen Gentium* specifies this by stating that “taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life we offer the Divine Victim to God and offer ourselves along with it.”<sup>33</sup> As the culmination of God’s sanctification of the world in Christ and of our offer of worship to Christ, the Eucharist is the “efficacious sign and sublime cause of the “communion in the divine life and the unity of the People of God.”<sup>34</sup> In every Mass, Christ is present and substantially present in the form of bread and wine. His death becomes a present reality offered as our sacrifice to God in a sacramental manner and each time the sacrifice on the cross is celebrated the work of our redemption is carried on.

Participating in the supper of the Lord we transcend all time and become totally one body in Christ. Through his presence in the Eucharist, Christ fulfills his promise to be with us “always, until the end of age.”<sup>35</sup> Further, as St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, “Christ has not left us without his bodily presence in this our pilgrimage, but he joins us to himself in this sacrament in the reality of his body and blood.”<sup>36</sup> Our future with God becomes a present reality and the oneness to which we are destined is both symbolized by and made real through the bread and wine – both past and future become present in the mystery.

As source, the Holy Eucharist reveals that our salvation begins with God and not ourselves. The Eucharist is Christ himself, whereas other sacraments are the actions of Christ, the Eucharist is Christ under the appearance of bread and wine.<sup>37</sup> “This is my body which will

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<sup>33</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

<sup>34</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1325.

<sup>35</sup> Mt. 28:20 (New American Bible).

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III q. 75, a. 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1324; 1373-1381.

be given up for you...this is the cup of my blood.” The Eucharist is not merely a ritual reenactment of Christ’s once for all sacrifice on the cross but a re-presentation of His sacrifice.<sup>38</sup> This is God’s offering of Himself to us, born of love in a very personal and intimate way. In his final encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharista*, Pope John Paul II describes the Eucharist as “Christ’s saving presence in the community of the faithful and its spiritual food.”<sup>39</sup>

A distinctly Catholic spirituality flows from the Eucharist also as summit—realization of our highest aspiration. When we respond to God’s offering by in turn offering ourselves back to God through Jesus Christ we place ourselves in communion with God. We reach out to Christ, opening our hearts and minds to him. As summit, all dimensions of Christian living, including the other sacraments, are ordered toward the Eucharist, towards our joining ourselves to the Son’s giving of himself back to the Father. The “same profound link between the sacrifice of the Cross and the Eucharist that makes the Eucharist the source of Christian spirituality also makes it the summit or high point of Christian spirituality.”<sup>40</sup> Our participation in the Eucharist draws us into the mystery of love as it was revealed on the Cross helping us to grow closer to God and to each other.

“To each other...” is not an insignificant aspect of Christian spirituality or of Eucharistic activity. Once again, a distinctly Catholic spirituality is lived out and made manifest in our relatedness to God and other. The Eucharistic celebration is not a private function but rather is a celebration of the Church and pertains to the whole body of the Church. We are not called to a

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 1326.

<sup>39</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia Eucharista*, [Encyclical on the Eucharist and Its Relationship to the Church], April 17, 2003, sec. 9, accessed October 19, 2010 [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_20030417\\_ecclesia\\_eucharista\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharista_en.html).

<sup>40</sup> Mark Brumley, *The Eucharist: Source and Summit of Christian Spirituality* Originally published in May/June 1996 issue of *The Catholic Faith*. <http://www.ignatiusinsight.com>.

banquet of one but to a banquet uniting all believers with Father through the body and blood of Son. In this Eucharistic celebration, we all, addicted or not, come together in our brokenness before God. Together, we hear the Word and the profession of faith as we recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread. The fellowship aspect of Twelve Step recovery reveals a kind of unity formed around a common desire for restoration and triumph over isolation and disillusion.

Since all the ways we give ourselves to God are directed to the Eucharist, are offering of ourselves in the Eucharistic celebration entails a death to self and an intentional steering of our thoughts and actions towards the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Further, it entails repentance of sin drawing us yet ever closer to a loving, forgiving God. In his homily given at the Mass he celebrated to close the 25<sup>th</sup> Eucharistic Congress in 2011, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of “Eucharistic spirituality as an antidote to individualism.”<sup>41</sup> In this homily, Pope Benedict shares that “Eucharistic communion tears us away from individualism, it communicates the spirit of Christ dead and risen, it conforms us to Him; it unites us intimately to brethren in that mystery of communion which is the Church, where the one Bread makes of many just one body.”<sup>42</sup> He shares that a Eucharistic spirituality helps us to engage with different forms of human fragility in ways that do not “obfuscate the value of a person” but rather enables us to accept and to be in helping relationship with those fragilities. He further reminds us that there is “nothing that is genuinely human that does not find in the Eucharist the right way to live it in fullness: hence,

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<sup>41</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Conclusion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Italian National Eucharistic Congress* Sunday, September 11, 2011, accessed December 28, 2015, <http://www.w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2011.index.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

daily life becomes the place of spiritual worship, to live the primacy of God in all circumstances, within a relationship with Christ and as an offering to the Father.”<sup>43</sup>

The sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist complete initiation for the Christian into a deep and abiding relationship with God, one that is forged in baptism, sealed by confirmation, and forever calling us into communion through our daily bread of the Holy Eucharist. Always at God’s invitation “take this, all of you, and eat it...” and “take this, all of you, and drink from it...,” the faithful respond by accepting this offering and are spiritually fed by the body and blood of Christ. This nourishment is the remedy for the hunger and thirst mankind experiences when estranged from God. As Augustine writes, addressing God: “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” This remedy however, is not a one-time panacea. It is necessary to come to the font again and again, recommitting oneself to imitating Christ, surrendering our will, and conforming to God’s will. The Eucharist is a visible sign of the unity and strength of Catholicism. The Eucharist unites us with Christ, increases grace, unifies us with the members of Christ’s body, strengthens charity and nourishes the soul.

### *Sacrament of Reconciliation*

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is another event of transformation and is integral to any progress of a spiritual nature as it frees us from anything that would separate us from God. This sacrament communicates the forgiveness and reconciliation embodied in the Paschal Mystery. It is in Christ Jesus that we are led back to the Father, that the alienation of sin is overcome and that a new life can be found as it restores our relationship with God. Jesus announces, through the Church and its ministers that our sins are forgiven and that God loves us.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the concrete expression of the restoration of a positive relationship where we act on what we know, not an abstract knowing, but a knowing that Jesus Christ takes on our sins and transforms us through mercy and forgiveness. As we meet and are met with love through the Penitential Rite, our friendship is renewed as it celebrates our love for God and our communion with God.

It also consecrates both the personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance and satisfaction as it “makes sacramentally present Jesus’ call to conversion.”<sup>44</sup> Conversion is the literal “turning” from acting on our will and realigning ourselves with the will of God – something the Third Step asks the recovering person to make the decision to do. Again, giving up something to get something greater. Penance is our recognition of our human limitations and failings and our intention to make reparation for those failings. Sin injures and weakens our relationship with self, other and God and so satisfaction entails those acts that repair the harm caused by sin. These acts are aimed not at punishment but at re-establishing relationships and habits that honor self, other and God.

In 1973, nearly ten years after Vatican II, the Church promulgated a revised Rite of Penance, which stated in the introduction that it is meant to be a sacrament of “healing” celebrated in an atmosphere of faith, thanksgiving and praise.<sup>45</sup> As part of an on-going reconciling process involving “inner conversion of heart” and “a profound change of the whole person,” the sacrament as described in the Rite consists of four acts; (1) the confession of sin, (2) exterior accusation, (3) satisfaction, and (4) absolution.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd Ed.*, 1423.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 6.

In his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominus*, Pope John Paul II describes the sacrament of a Penance as gift in this way:

In faithfully observing the centuries-old practice of the Sacrament of Penance – the practice of individual confession with a personal act of sorrow and the intention to amend and make satisfaction – the Church is therefore defending the human soul’s individual right: man’s right to a more personal encounter with the crucified and forgiving Christ, with Christ saying through the minister of the sacrament of reconciliation: Your sins are forgiven” (Mk 2:5); “Go, and do not sin again (Jn 8:11).” As is evident, this is also a right on Christ’s part with regard to every human being redeemed by him; his right to meet each one of us in that key moment in the soul’s life constituted by the moment of conversion and forgiveness.<sup>47</sup>

The act of penance followed by the grace of absolution is a movement towards restoration of one's human dignity, one’s authentic self, one’s salvation, and most importantly one’s broken relationship with God the Father. This theme echoes both the USCCB’s pastoral message as well the central theme in nearly all of Pope John Paul II’s papal instructions addressing the issue of chemical dependency: human dignity is an intrinsic value rooted in creation and redemption.

### *Prayer and Spirituality*

Prayer is an enduring and fundamental tool of Twelve Step recovery and is an ever-present and integral feature of Catholic spirituality. The Catholic faithful are invited into regular prayer daily, at Sunday Eucharist, in the Liturgy of the Hours and on feast days throughout the liturgical year. In Catholic prayer we pray in the name of Jesus, the Son. We usually begin liturgical prayer with “Father” and end with “grant this through Christ our Lord.” The Catechism instructs:

There is no other way of Christian prayer than Christ. Whether our prayer is communal or personal, vocal or interior, it has access to the Father only if we pray “in the name” of Jesus. The sacred humanity of Jesus is therefore the way by which the Holy Spirit teaches

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<sup>47</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominus*, March 4, 1979, sec. 20 in *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, ed J. Michael Miller (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1996).

us to pray to God our Father.<sup>48</sup>

God gives us this longing for Him and so in prayer we are allowing that longing to rise above towards God. St. Therese of Lisieux's declaration illuminates the relational nature of prayer: "For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned towards heaven; it is a cry of recognition and love; embracing both trial and joy."<sup>49</sup> The impulse to pray comes from our heart then raises our minds towards God acknowledging His call and responding in humility.

For Catholics in recovery, prayer expresses in words the encounter with God experienced by them personally and with the Church as a whole and its individual members. Prayer is an intimate one-on-one dialogue that actualizes and deepens communion with God and while it is always personal, and from the heart, there are also specifically formulated prayers brought by the teaching Church. These prayers draw upon the words of Christ, of Scripture, and of the writings of the saints all with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "Without the Holy Spirit speaking through the Church and through her saints, we would not know how to pray as we ought."<sup>50</sup> These prayers inform and inspire our communication with God and nourish and express our relationship to him as they help us to know him. As Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, without formulaic prayers, praying can revert to subjective images of God and are at risk of reflecting the individual more than the living God of faith.

In the formulaic prayers that arose from the faith of Israel and then from the faith of praying members of the Church, we get to know God and know ourselves as well. They are a 'school of prayer' that transforms and opens up our life.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2664.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 2558.

<sup>50</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 2650.

<sup>51</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 130.

Pope Benedict goes on to write that in his Rule (19, 7), “Saint Benedict coined the formula *Mens nostra concordat voci nostrae* – our mind must be in accord with our voice.”<sup>52</sup> This is the converse of what takes place in that normally “thought precedes word; it seeks and formulates the word.”<sup>53</sup> However, in praying the Psalms and in liturgical prayer the converse is true as the word or our voicing of it comes first and then our minds must adapt to it. Pope Benedict discussing the Rule writes:

For on our own we human beings do not “know how to pray as we ought” (Rom 8:26) – we are too far removed from God, he is too mysterious and too great for us. “we do not know how to pray as we ought,” we are too far removed from God, he is too mysterious and great for us. And, so, God has come to our aid: He himself provides the words of our prayer and teaches us to pray. Through the prayers that come from him, he enables us to set out toward him, by praying together with the brothers and sisters he has given us, we gradually come to know him and draw closer to him.<sup>54</sup>

The Our Father is a familiar and relevant example of praying to God with the words given by God. In the Gospel of Luke, the context for the Our Father is Jesus’ own praying “thereby involving us in his own prayer; leading us into the interior dialogue of triune love; drawing our hardships deep into God’s heart.”<sup>55</sup> The words of the Our Father provide more than a direction for how to pray, they also provide a fundamental direction for our being as they aim to configure our being to the image of Jesus. “The meaning of the Our Father goes much further than the mere provision of a prayer text, it aims to form our being, to train us in the inner attitude of Jesus.”<sup>56</sup> As we learn from Matthew’s Gospel, prayer is not an occasion for showing off to

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 132.

others but is rather totally personal in the way that requires a kind of discretion between ourselves and God and at the same time is communal. We pray the Our Father from our own personal heart but do so in communion with the family of God.

St. Alphonsus of Ligouri published a treatise in which he asserted a two-fold message about prayer; first that in it we ought to go to God with “unwavering confidence” as God shows “infinite tenderness and love,” and, second that if “we wish to serve God we should speak to him frequently, confidently and lovingly.”<sup>57</sup> In his chapter on how God answers the soul, he writes that when we speak to God he responds in a voice that “reaches the heart:”

He will speak by inspiration, by interior light, by manifestations of his goodness, by a tenderness which touches the heart, by assurance of pardon, by a feeling of peace, by the hope of heaven, by intimate happiness, by the sweetness of his grace, by loving and tender embraces of the soul-in a word, he will speak in a voice easily understood by those whom he loves and who have given their hearts to him.<sup>58</sup>

A similar message is echoed by Pope Benedict as he writes that our relationship with God should not be confined to occasions of need or thanksgiving but that we should make prayer the “bedrock of our soul.”<sup>59</sup> We do this by constantly fortifying our relationship with God through engaged prayer and by relating the affairs of our day constantly back to God keeping a consciousness of his presence at the center of all we think and do.

Through the formulaic prayers taught us by the Church, we enter into the presence of God dwelling within us in particular and richly texturized ways as we adore God, acknowledge his almighty power, as we bring our thanks, our petitions our sorrows and our sins. We pray directly to God, and to those close to God - his intercessors, the angels and saints. We pray to

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<sup>57</sup> Saint Alphonsus De Liguori, *How to Pray at All Times*, Trans. T.A.M., C.S.S.R. [a Redemptorist] (London: Catholic Way Publishing, 2015) Kindle Edition: Loc. 59.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

<sup>59</sup> Pope Benedict, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 129.

the Blessed Mother enlisting her aid in bringing our petitions to her Son. We pray on our own behalf and on behalf of those souls in need, both on this earth and those in purgatory, uniting us not only to God but also to all members of the Mystical Body.

### *Scripture*

In addition to prayer, a relationship with God is deepened through meditation and contemplation of Scripture. Scripture is a primary witness to God acting in the life of man and is integral to a spiritual program of recovery rooted in the Catholic tradition. In the Vatican II document on divine revelation, *Dei Verbum*, the Council writes of the significance of Scripture to spirituality:

In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them. And such is the force and power of the Word of God that it can serve the Church as her support and vigor, and the children of the Church – as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting fount of spiritual life.<sup>60</sup>

Led by the Holy Spirit, Scripture connects us to the truth that resides within us. Scripture reveals to us the basic principles of Christian life and is therefore a rich resource for transforming one's thinking and acting and ultimately in revealing one's true nature.

Fr. Aumann in his writing on spiritual theology writes:

The bible, therefore, is the word of God that reveals to man his high destiny and also answers man's innate desire to rise from a fallen condition and to experience the divine. It is the rule and standard of all authentic supernatural life and it demands everything; it will not be reduced to our measure because its aim is to fashion us in the image of God. It cannot be replaced by any *ersatz* spirituality or religious experience which some may seek in spiritism, drugs, group therapy, psychedelic experience or Pentecostalism.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* [Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation], November 18, 1965, sec. 2, in *Vatican Council II, Vol. I: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975).

<sup>61</sup> Jordan Aumann, *Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition*, 11.

What Fr. Aumann is saying is particularly important to this project in that what is available to us in Scripture, as a source of divine revelation, cannot be found anywhere else. In it God tells us who he is and who we are to him. He tells us how to find him and how to know him. There is no replacement for this and therefore any spirituality absent scripture lacks a significant and tangible resource necessary to transform one's life and to live one's life according to God's will.

A distinctly Catholic spirituality will include the living transmission of the entirety of the word of God entrusted to the apostles by Christ and the Holy Spirit. As the Catechism delineates:

Christ the Lord, in whom the entire Revelation of the most high God is summed up, commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel, which had been promised beforehand by the prophets, and which he fulfilled in his own person and promulgated with his own lips. In preaching the Gospel, they were to communicate the gifts of God to all men. This Gospel was to be the source of all saving truth and moral discipline.<sup>62</sup>

The apostles entrusted the *depositum fidei*, the sacred deposit of the faith contained in sacred scripture and tradition, to the whole of the Church. The religious perspective brings to spirituality a rich apostolic heritage. Sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church, under the action of the Holy Spirit, all work together and contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

### *Concluding Remarks*

A spirituality understood from a Catholic perspective declares the importance of each individual, no matter how steeped in his or her disease, it declares solidarity between Christ and sufferer, and it declares God's firm promise to respond to all who seek his aid. Through the mystery of the Incarnation, God unites himself to our humanity and to our world "so intimately and so definitively that there can be no opposition or disjunction between the glory of God,

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<sup>62</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 24.

which is the ultimate end of everything, and the happiness of man or the completion of the world.”<sup>63</sup> God provides the answer to human questions in Christ who through his word and deed reveals the wisdom and saving grace that the afflicted, including addicts, so desperately need.

It is not my intention to suggest that Catholics in recovery should abandon a Twelve Step based recovery or even the spiritual program of A.A. for religion, but rather to bring them through that portal and into a deeper, unambiguous relationship with God and his saving grace. It is not impossible for a recovering person or anyone to know God and to have a relationship with God on his own. It is not impossible to know God as the origin and end of the universe, as the highest good and infinite truth by way of reason as is the case with much secular spirituality. It is however difficult to fully enter into the intimacy of the divine mystery on one’s own. “This is why he stands in need of being enlightened by God’s revelation, not only about those things that exceed his understanding, but also about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason, so that even in the present condition of the human race, they can be known by all with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error.”<sup>64</sup>

There are innumerable insights, resources, and blessings in the authentic treasures of the Church and in its living tradition that hold the transformative power needed to fight the scourge of addiction. A spiritual program grounded in the Catholic tradition will unambiguously mediate God’s self-revelation through scripture, tradition, doctrines of beliefs, rules of life, standards of conduct and through God’s special means of grace, the sacraments with which he acts through with great power.

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<sup>63</sup> Jordan Aumann, *Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 11.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Within the common priesthood of all the faithful, *Lumen Gentium* spelled out the reality of the universality of the Church and the acceptance of cultural diversity and pluralism when it said, “the Church or People of God which establishes this Kingdom does not take away anything from the temporal welfare of any people. Rather she fosters and takes to herself, in so far as they are good, the abilities, the resources and customs of peoples. In so taking them to herself she purifies, strengthens, and elevates them.”<sup>65</sup> Catholic spirituality takes up Twelve Step spirituality – purifies, strengthens and elevates it. It provides a depth, texture and dimension to it that resonates with a Catholic in recovery.

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<sup>65</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*.

## CHAPTER IV

### Project Description and Implementation

#### *Spirituality in the Treatment of Addictions*

A person entering recovery, whether through a formalized treatment program or by attending Twelve Step meetings, will encounter the topic of spirituality and its relevance to their process of arresting addiction. Spirituality is first introduced in the treatment setting as a topic in psycho-education lectures along with other topics such as the cycle of addiction, relapse prevention, and so forth. The treatment program's spiritual care provider has the charge of presenting the topic, carefully distinguishing the difference between religion and spirituality. In treatment settings, the primary purpose of spiritual care is to help individuals draw on the spiritual experience, strength, and hope of the Twelve Steps, although some may refer to a Twelve Step spirituality as something a recovering person seeks on their own as they get further into recovery. Spiritual care aims to promote ongoing spiritual growth as a necessary component of sustaining sobriety and includes assistance in finding and restoring a relationship with a Higher Power, as well as the integration of the Twelve Steps into life in recovery.

In Twelve Step meetings, spirituality is referenced in the stories shared and in the common parlance of those in attendance. Informal discussions among members of recovery groups often include references to a higher power and to the spiritual essentials such as honesty, open-mindedness and willingness. Spirituality is also heavily referenced in recovery resources such as books and online portals of information, which are often sought by those anxiously seeking change. These resources include literature produced by A.A. and other Twelve Step programs as well as a plethora of self-help oriented books and pamphlets.

As I discussed earlier, the founders of A.A. made the calculated decision to emphasize their program as “spiritual and not religious” and Alcoholics Anonymous World Services maintains this in its print and online literature today. One such example is found in a pamphlet titled *Many Paths to Spirituality*, where the following excerpts can be found:

A misconception about Alcoholics Anonymous is that it is a religious organization. Since A.A. groups often rent space in churches, attending an A.A. meeting in a church basement can reinforce that impression, and the possibility of hearing a prayer at the end of a meeting can further cement the idea for some.<sup>1</sup>

Recognizing, first of all, that we needed to stay sober, many of us began to discover that we could utilize the A.A. program without conforming to religious or spiritual concepts we either disagreed with or didn't have. As we became more familiar with A.A., we began to realize the deep significance in the phrasing of A.A.'s Twelve Steps, which emphasize a Power greater than ourselves, and God, *as we understand him*.<sup>2</sup>

In working the program, we came to a better understanding of spirituality and the part it plays in our recovery.<sup>3</sup>

The following is a quote from a member of A.A. in the same pamphlet:

“When I first came to A.A., I thought that religion and spirituality were the same thing. But I've come to realize that religion means being committed to a practice of belief, and being spiritual means actively living life through a life-giving force. I believe this is any power greater than myself, whether I choose to call it God, Allah, Higher Power, Creative Intelligence, or the Power of Good.”<sup>4</sup>

In addition to emphasizing the distinction between religion and spirituality, A.A.'s literature carries within it the wisdom of its early members who made four important discoveries about the spiritual experience:

1. The spiritual is essential to being fully human. Understanding the spiritual and accepting it is vital to understanding chemical dependency as a disease with a spiritual remedy. In

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<sup>1</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, *Many Paths to Spirituality* (New York: A.A. Publications, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

order to accept this, alcoholics have to reject two stereotypes – that of the weak willed, skid row bum and the concept of the spiritual as church attendance and lofty ideals.

2. Spirituality does not involve magic, but does involve mystery and miracle. Seeking the magical is the antithesis of spirituality because it replicates the experience of alcoholic drinking.
3. Spirituality is open-ended with an emphasis on progress and not perfection. Spirituality is something you only have as long as you are trying to get it.
4. Spirituality is pervasive. The spiritual is not a separate category but is rather like glue that holds together a whole.

Spiritual care professionals speaking on the topic of spirituality in recovery reiterate the distinction between spirituality and religion for the same or similar reasons as A.A.; a desire to be inclusive and not risk alienating those who, for various reasons, need the distinction in order to take vital steps towards recovery. The following are examples of some of the distinctions that might be made:

- Spirituality can be described but not defined. It has to do with meaning and purpose in life, as a way of life and a way of thinking that helps sobriety.
- Spirituality concerns an individual's direct experience and personal notion of the sacred, in contrast to religion's focus on specific belief systems and dogma.
- Spirituality concerns the quality or nature of one's relationships with a higher power, with one's self, and with others.
- Religion concerns an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals and symbols through which a relationship to God is developed and nourished.
- Religion is rooted in a vision of ultimate truth while spirituality is rooted in experience.

Spiritual care in the context of recovery from addictions is based on the assumption that as humans we all possess an innate capacity to experience transcendence - meaning beyond the limits of time, space and language, and beyond human ability to analyze, contain or explain.

Therefore, all persons, even those who consider themselves agnostic or atheist, are spiritual, whether or not they choose to express their spirituality through religious language or practice.

Despite all the efforts to distinguish spirituality from religion, it has been my experience that many Catholics reach a point in their recovery when they seek more than the universal precepts and subjective conceptions of higher power that are fundamentally a part of the Twelve Steps. Replete with the qualifier “*God of our understanding*,” the language of the Steps makes it difficult for a Catholic not to contemplate particular religious based presuppositions about what exactly this means. It is here where the tension that inspired this project begins to develop. How do Catholics in recovery bridge some of the specifics of their religion with the universal concepts of Twelve Step spirituality? This project aims to develop a program that assists in doing this.

### **Description of the Project**

The program I have developed for this Project in Ministry is titled *A Catechetical Program for Roman Catholics in Twelve Step Recovery Programs*. It draws on the topic of spirituality in recovery then distinguishes itself by locating recovery in a religion-based spirituality. By “religion-based,” I mean within the teachings and activities of the Catholic Church. In other words, from the understanding that spirituality for a Catholic, is not extra to the Church, it is the Church.

The program, conceived of as an adult catechetical program, is distinguished from other activities of the Church, although as with other catechetical endeavors it is not separate from them. These distinctions are enumerated in a document formulated by the International Council for Catechesis, *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community (ACC hereafter)*. The following

represent ways in which adult catechesis differs from other activities of the Church according to the ACC:

1. It is different from evangelization, which is the proclamation of the Gospel for the first time to those who have not heard it, or the re-evangelization of those who have forgotten it.
2. It is different from formal religious education, which goes beyond the basic elements of faith in more systematic and specialized courses.
3. It is also different from those informal occasions for faith awareness in God's presence, which arise in fragmentary and incidental ways in the daily life of adults.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, it remains closely related to the above aspects of faith development in the following ways:

1. It makes explicit in the life of adults the reality of God's message (*kerygma*), taking into consideration concrete human situations, and "translating" them into the cultural language of the people.
2. It goes to the core of the doctrinal content of our faith, presenting the fundamental beliefs of the creed in a way that relates to the life experience of people, instilling in them a faith mentality.
3. It calls for a structured and organized, though perhaps very elementary, faith journey, which is expressed and sustained by listening to the Word of God, by celebration (*liturgy*), by charitable service (*diakonia*), and by a forthright witness in the various situations in which adults find themselves.<sup>6</sup>

The program is also distinct from catechesis in the service of Christian initiation and is better understood as being in the service of ongoing faith formation. It therefore follows upon basic formative religious education and presupposes it and follows the character of an occasional catechesis, which, according to the *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC hereafter)*, "seeks to interpret determined circumstances of personal, family, ecclesial or social life and to help them

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<sup>5</sup> International Council for Catechesis, "*Adult Catechesis in the Community: Some Principles and Guidelines*" (Liberia Editrice Vaticana: St. Paul Publications, 1990), 32.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

live in the prospect of faith, aiming to reinforce or recall fundamentals of their faith, open new perspectives and encourage perseverance in prayer and in the duties of following Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

The program will also reflect certain operative features germane to adult catechesis drawn from the ACC in its section on guidelines for implementation as well as from the USCCB’s pastoral plan, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*. The ACC states that the “ultimate and unifying goal of adult catechesis is to help the mature Christian to live as an adult by acquiring certain qualities.”<sup>8</sup> It groups these qualities around three major goals, roots them in a common vision and then articulates certain objectives and content. As catechesis, the program expresses a clear Catholic identity and will be centered on a clear proclamation of the Gospel, and further will include attending a celebration of the liturgy. The three main *goals* of adult catechesis and adopted for this project are:

1. The first goal is to invite and enable ongoing conversion to Jesus in Holiness of life.<sup>9</sup>

The program thus aims to promote an openness of heart to the mystery of the Lord’s greatness and grace. It does this by encouraging sincere reconciliation with God, with others and with oneself. Further, it invites participants to integrate their spiritual development with their religious faith and to judge their personal, social and spiritual experiences in light of that faith.

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<sup>7</sup> Congregation for the Clergy of the Roman Catholic Church, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 1997), n. 71.

<sup>8</sup> *Adult Catechesis in the Community*, 34.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

2. The second goal of adult catechesis is to promote and support active membership in the Christian community.<sup>10</sup> In *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, the Conference states the following:

As adult believers, we learn and live our faith as active members of the Church. Our response to God's call to community 'cannot remain abstract and unincarnated,' but rather, 'reveals itself concretely by a visible entry into a community of believers...a community which itself is a sign of transformation, a sign of newness of life: it is the Church, the visible sacrament of salvation.'<sup>11</sup>

The program encourages participants to concretize their response to God's call by integrating their spiritual development with an active life in the Church. Further inspiration for this goal comes from Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, where he expresses that once a person has accepted the "Church as the Word which saves," that normally gets translated into "adherence to the Church, acceptance of the sacraments which manifest and support the aforementioned adherence through the grace which they confer."<sup>12</sup>

3. The third goal of adult catechesis is to call and prepare adults to act as disciples in mission to the world.<sup>13</sup> Strengthening and deepening one's relationship with God has a profound effect not only on the individual but can bear witness to others the transforming power of God's love and care.

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<sup>10</sup> USCCB, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation* (Washington, DC: USCCB, Inc., 1999), 70.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, [Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelism in the Modern World], December 8, 1975, sec. 23, accessed October 3, 2016 [http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/.../hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii\\_nuntiandi.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/.../hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii_nuntiandi.html).

<sup>13</sup> USCCB, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, 71.

The above goals of catechesis can be attained through objectives, which specify more concretely the catechetical journey. The following objectives outlined by the ACC served to guide decisions related to the development of the programs material:

1. *A basic understanding of the Church's faith* drawn directly from sources of Revelation including; the Bible, the Liturgy, the Fathers, the Magisterium of the Church, other great documents of the Tradition, and the experience of Christian living in the ecclesial communities.<sup>14</sup>
2. *An appropriate assimilation of the theological and cultural heritage in which faith is expressed.* This implies a knowledge of the major religious signs and symbols of faith, the role and use of the Bible, a grasp of the significance and practice of liturgical and private prayer, and an awareness of the impact of religious belief on culture and institutions.<sup>15</sup>
3. The capacity of *Christian discernment* in various situations, particularly regarding ethical principles which bear on human life and dignity and which have to do with respect for justice and the cause of the weak and the poor.<sup>16</sup>
4. The acquisition of those *skills and abilities, which allow the adult believer to carry out his Christian witness* in the most diverse circumstances, in the community and in society.<sup>17</sup>

These objectives are reflected in the program through didactic presentations, in handouts, recommendations for reading and further study, in individual and group exercises, in responses by the facilitator and in individual and group dialogue.

Corresponding to the objectives above and in consideration of the common needs of contemporary adult believers, the contents of the program include these basic components of adult catechesis as put forth by the ACC:

1. Catechesis has to present in a comprehensive and systemic way the *great themes of the Christian religion* which involve faith and reasons for believing, namely; the mystery of God and the Trinity, Christ, the Church, the sacraments, and other contemporary themes in religion. It will respect the hierarchy of truths and their interrelationship.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Adult Catechesis in the Community*, 39.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

2. In the context of an increasingly complex and pluralistic society, particular importance will be attached to a knowledge of the truths of the Gospel, and the Church's duty to enlighten and educate the moral conscience.<sup>19</sup>
3. To help bring adults to completeness and full maturity in their knowledge of the Christian faith, catechesis must include an *introduction* to the reading and use of Sacred Scripture, both private and communal, as well as the most important expressions of liturgy and prayer.<sup>20</sup>
4. Precisely because the principle content of adult catechesis is the revelation of the living God who saves human beings and helps them to realize their full potential, this catechesis must be dynamic and relevant so adults, to their own satisfaction, can become gradually more aware of their value and dignity as human beings, as a result of a careful and stimulating exposition of the great truths of faith.<sup>21</sup>
5. Conscious of how secularized and pluralistic the world can be, the catechesis of adults seeks to provide solid formation in spirituality suitable for the Christian laity.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, in accordance with the USCCB's pastoral plan for adult formation, Scripture and Tradition will be at the core of the content presented. In order to assist the participants in grasping both the content of faith and the application of faith to their recovery, I will draw on several theological, pastoral and catechetical resources including both Scripture and the Catechism of the Church. Additionally, interwoven throughout the content are the fundamental tasks of catechesis identified in the General Directory as "helping to know, to celebrate and to contemplate the mystery of Christ."<sup>23</sup>

### *Method*

To ensure fidelity to the content, I will utilize catechetical methods and approaches encouraged in the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC here after) and the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC). Primary among these include use of the inductive and deductive method

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>23</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 85.

and the life experience of the participants. An inductive method conforms to the economy of Revelation and so will be utilized to present such facts with respect to biblical events, liturgical acts, events in the life of the Church and events from daily life. It proceeds from the visible, tangible experiences of the participants and moves to more general conclusions and principles of Catholic belief. This method also conforms to the characteristics of knowledge of the faith, which is knowledge by means of signs, and is particularly pertinent to discussing liturgical and sacramental spirituality. This method is considered a more *existential* approach as it begins with the specifics of the participants' experience and examines them in light of the Word of God.

The deductive method begins with the general principles or truths of the faith and applies them to the concrete experiences of the participants. This method corresponds with the *kerygmatic* approach as it starts with the proclamation of the faith as expressed in Sacred Scripture, doctrine, the creeds and the liturgy and applies it to the life experiences of participants. In catechesis a deductive method can only work well in conjunction with the inductive as God's revelation of himself is by his initiative and not reached merely by reason.

Most importantly, the educative elements of the program will endeavor to connect to the experience of the participants and especially to their recovery experiences. The NDC states the following:

Human experiences provide the sensible signs that lead the person, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to a better understanding of the truths of faith. They are the means through which human beings come to know themselves, one another and God.<sup>24</sup>

Catechesis helps them relate the Christian message to the most profound questions in life: the experience of God, the destiny of the human person, the origin and end of history, the truth about good and evil, the meaning of suffering and death and so forth.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> USCCB, *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2014), .98.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

It is a task of catechesis to help the faithful become more aware of their experiences and to interpret and illuminate them with the substance of their faith. Specific to this program, the task is to make the participants more aware of how within the experience of addiction and recovery, God is calling them to holiness and inviting them to discover the way to a deeper relationship with him. The Twelve Steps provide a more than adequate framework for discovering the correlations and interactions between recovery from addictions and the revealed message.

### *Purpose of the Program*

Returning to the central tension that inspired this project, the whole aim of the Twelve Steps is to bring about a spiritual awakening achieved through improving the quality of one's relationship with God, others and self. For a Catholic in recovery, this kind of conversion experience finds its fulfillment through the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church. A spirituality nourished and texturized through sacraments, liturgy and prayer is formative and transformative of the inner life of a Christian as they are living contact with Christ and are efficacious signs of God's desire to touch and transform us and through them he does so.

To reiterate an earlier point, the purpose of this program is not to negate the spiritual practices and benefits of Twelve Step programs but rather to build into the Twelve Step outline a distinctive Catholic imagination and sensibility that flows from participation in the life of the Church. To achieve its intended purpose, the program guides participants to a "newness of life" in Christ. As such it follows the *Catechism's* directive for the way of Christ which leads to "life" rather than the converse way which leads to "destruction." The Catechism states that catechesis for newness of life in him should be:

1. *A catechesis of the Holy Spirit*, the interior of life according to Christ, a gentle guest and friend who inspires, guides, corrects, and strengthens this life;

2. *a catechesis of grace*, as it is by grace that we are saved and again it is by grace that our works can bear fruit for eternal life;
3. *a catechesis of sin and forgiveness*, unless man acknowledges that his sinfulness, he cannot know the truth about himself, which is a condition for acting justly; and without the offer of forgiveness he would not be able to bear this truth;
4. *a catechesis of the human virtues* which causes one to grasp the attraction of right dispositions towards goodness;
5. *a catechesis of the Christian virtues* of faith, hope and charity, generously inspired by the life of saints; and,
6. *a catechesis of the twofold commandment of charity* set forth in the Decalogue; and, *an ecclesial catechesis*, as it is through the manifold exchanges of “spiritual goods” in the “communion of saints” that Christian life can grow, develop and be communicated.<sup>26</sup>

The basis for the project and all that it instructs will lie on the premise that Catholic spirituality is a liturgical, sacramental and scriptural spirituality. It is both personal and communal and includes the concrete experience of responding to God’s invitation to be in relationship to him and to each other through his example. And finally, it will have as the first and last point of reference Jesus Christ, “who is the way, the truth, and the life.”<sup>27</sup>

## **Implementation**

### *Recruitment of Participants*

The participants in this project include men and women who identify themselves as Roman Catholic and who are in Twelve Step recovery programs. Participants were recruited through an announcement posted at several outpatient treatment programs and through my network of colleagues working in addictions. (Appendix C.2) The announcements were mailed or emailed along with a cover letter providing background information about myself and briefly explaining my project in ministry. I asked for their assistance in posting the announcement and sharing it with anyone they thought might have an interest. The announcement stated that I was

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<sup>26</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, 1697.

<sup>27</sup> Jn 14:6 (New American Bible).

looking for volunteers who were Catholic (active or not) and in Twelve Step recovery to take part in my project's research by attending, free of charge, an educational series over four or six weeks. It further stated that they would be asked to evaluate the program upon completion. The announcement also indicated the basic outline of the program, as well as clearly stating a protocol for protecting their anonymity. I included some background information about myself including my professional work as a facilitator of psycho-educational programs and recovery focused therapeutic groups.

Response to the first offering was enthusiastic. I had eleven people contact me with interest and of those six were able to commit. Two others indicated they were interested and welcomed my contacting them for future offerings. Response to the second offering was fairly small but still enthusiastic. Of the eight people that contacted me, six were able to commit. Once the participant agreed to participate in the program, he/she was forwarded an outline of the program, guidelines for participation, a consent form and initial questionnaires. Each participant was asked to meet for an initial interview with the facilitator and these were scheduled before the start of the program.

To ensure the anonymity of all participants, no names are included in any part of this paper. Each participant was assigned a numeric identifier and any reference to an individual is made only by this identifying marker. To further protect the anonymity of participants, all facilitator notes and participant responses to questionnaires will be kept confidential in a locked cabinet in my locked office.

### *Evaluation*

Each participant was asked to complete a pre-program questionnaire and was asked a series of questions in the initial individual interview. They were then asked to complete a post-

program questionnaire evaluating change, if at all, in their knowledge or ability to integrate Twelve Step spirituality with their Catholic faith. At the end of the last session the participants were also asked to complete an evaluation of the program and facilitator.

Interviews were used as a source for qualitative evaluation of the program. In the interview open ended questions were asked and discussed and recorded for accuracy of reporting. To deepen personal reflection, at the end of each session reflection questions (average of two to three) were handed out and gathered at the next session. The reflection questions were based on the theme for the week and invited participants to reflect more deeply upon their own experiences of spiritual development. The next chapter provides more detail on evaluation instruments as well as discussion of results.

#### *Overview of Program Structure*

The program, as I refer to it throughout this description and in the evaluation, was presented to two separate groups. In the first group, there were originally six participants who signed on to attend, however, one had to drop out leaving five participants in Group I. In the second group seven participants signed on to attend included in this number is the participant who had to drop out of first session but was able to attend the second. Combined, a total of twelve recovering individuals attended the program. My project proposal initially envisioned two sessions of three hours each, however, as I worked out the curriculum this would not allow for enough time to cover all the material in a meaningful way. Thus, the initial idea was amended becoming a four-week program of two-hour segments attended once a week for four consecutive weeks, which also worked better for scheduling purposes. This first group is identified as Group I.

As the evaluation will demonstrate, four sessions seemed to abbreviate the experiential aspect and focused too much on my sharing content. This in mind, I added two additional sessions to Group II allowing more time for group reflection on the material. Following the suggestion of my project director that the program would be enhanced by a shared experience of the liturgy, I decided to make attendance at liturgy a group rather than individual activity. The last of the six sessions then was reserved for attending liturgy as a group followed by reflection on the experience.

The below discussion of the implementation of the sessions includes both Group I and Group II. Even though Group II had two additional sessions, the content remained the same for both. The program structure included three essential components: didactic, reflection and experiential. Additionally, both planned and spontaneous group discussion was encouraged.

#### *Didactic*

The didactic component had the aim of providing catechetical guidance, although included a style preference of mine which is to present the information in a manner that is more of a dialogue rather than a monologue. Below, in the breakdown of the sessions, I provide an overview of the material presented for each session. Additionally, content is reflected in the handouts for the participants to be found in the appendices.

#### *Reflection*

The group and individual discussions and reflections were both planned and spontaneous. Throughout the program, I looked for opportunities to encourage participants to reflect in ways that allow their faith to come into dialogue with their experience of recovery. Two types of reflection that were planned were a simple engagement in *Lectio Divina* and Gospel contemplation. I drew the following methods of reflection on Scripture from Fr. Douglas

Leonhardt's, contributions to the "*What-How-Why of Prayer*" segment on Ignatian prayer from the website [IgnatianSpirituality.com](http://IgnatianSpirituality.com).<sup>28</sup> The two forms of reflection were formatted as follows:

### Simple Lectio Divina

1. The group observes a few moments of silence in anticipation of hearing the Word of God.
2. First Gospel passage is read aloud. After a few moments of quiet reflection, the same biblical text is read again.
3. After the text is read and heard a second time, each of the participants is invited to speak a word or phrase that he or she has heard in the reading.
4. One at a time, each person says a word or phrase that has touched them or that they have heard anew.
5. Next, the reading is proclaimed a third time, and once again a brief time of reflection follows.
6. The participants are then asked to share any part of the reading that they find to be meaningful, instructive or formative. The hope is that as participants begin to share what they have heard in the reading and listen to one another's insights, a spiritual bond can begin to form that can help each participant deepen his or her relationship with God, who is present, with each other and with themselves.

### Gospel Contemplation

1. Each participant chooses among a list of Gospel passages or uses one of their choice.
2. They each (silently to themselves) call to mind that God is present to them and that they are engaging in the Word of God and contemplate what they want from the encounter.
3. They each read their Gospel passage twice to familiarize themselves with the details of the story.
4. Next the participants were instructed to reconstruct the scene in their imagination. For example: to imagine what is happening in the scene; who is present; what does Jesus look like; how do others react to him; what emotions fill the words of those present. Participants were invited to enter the scene perhaps as an observer or lining up for healing or to be a helper of Jesus.
5. According to Fr. Leonhardt, some people's imaginations are very active so they construct a movie-like scenario with a Gospel passage. Others will enter the scene with verbal

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<sup>28</sup> Douglas Leonhardt, *Praying With Scripture* Ignatian Spirituality, (accessed July 13, 2015), [www.Ignatianspirituality.com](http://www.Ignatianspirituality.com).

imagination, reflecting on the scene and mulling over the actions. Vividness is not a criterion for the effectiveness of this kind of prayer. The effectiveness is the engagement, which results in a more interior knowledge of Jesus.

6. To wrap up the scene the participants were then invited to take a moment to speak person to person with Christ saying what comes from their heart.

### *Experiential*

The primary experiential activity was attending Mass. With the understanding that liturgical participation is especially conducive to spiritual formation, my objective was to facilitate an opportunity for conscious connection of recovery to a worshipping community. Following the attendance at Mass, the participants engaged in group reflection with the aim of deepening their experience. A set of questions were handed out to guide reflection although all were invited to share reflections of their own inspiration.

One final note about the program structure, it was designed with the following assumptions in mind about the participants' level of background knowledge:

1. Even though the participants have varying lengths of time in recovery (all of which are noted in the evaluation), they each had a minimum of basic understanding of addiction as a physical, mental and spiritual disease.
2. Each participant has elected to recover through a Twelve Step approach and all have some familiarization with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Step spirituality.
3. Each participant was baptized in the Catholic Church and has had a minimum of formational catechism.

### **The Sessions**

For ease of scheduling purposes, I broke the program into two-hour [2.0] segments totaling 12 hours of in-program didactic and experiential learning. This made it possible to be flexible in terms of scheduling as it allows for various combinations of time allotment, i.e. six two hour sessions or three 4.0 hour sessions. In addition to the scheduled sessions, participants

were asked to invest an additional two hours of participation: approximately one hour for surveys and take home exercises and approximately one hour for a one-on-one interview with myself.

Each session was designed around a particular theme as follows:

*Session #1:* Part 1. “Twelve Step Spirituality”  
Part 2. “God of our Understanding”

*Session #2:* “Spirituality Rooted in Religious Faith”

*Session #3:* “Liturgy and Spirituality”

*Session #4:* “Sacraments and Spirituality”

*Session #5:* “Prayer and Spirituality”

*Session #6:* Experiential – Mass Attendance

### **Session 1 [2.0 hr.]**

The participants all gathered in the group room at the appointed time. Once everyone was comfortably seated, I started by asking the participants to join me in prayer:

1. A moment of silence followed by the Sign of the Cross.
2. I invited the participants to call to mind the presence of God.
3. I asked the participants to join me in the “Lord’s Prayer.”
4. We concluded with the Sign of the Cross and “Amen.”

I then welcomed the participants and thanked them again for their willingness to participate in the project. I gave them each a packet that contained handouts and evaluation forms. (Appendix B) I informed them of the format for the sessions, specifically that they would include a combination of my presenting, group reflection, and group exercises. I made a point of letting them know that I welcomed their questions and thoughts during my presentations. We then spent a few minutes with introductions and got started.

### 1.1 *Twelve Step Spirituality*

Part one was a summation of the spiritual dimension of addiction and recovery, identifying key concepts in Twelve Step spirituality. The aim here was to affirm a common language and understanding of the role of spirituality in recovery. This summation was commensurate conceptually with what is taught in Twelve Step oriented treatment programs. Since of the twelve participants, five had not received formal treatment, it seemed a good idea to be sure all had access to the same information. The five that had not attended formal treatment got sober or clean through participation in the A.A. program, i.e., attending meetings, sponsorship and working the Steps. The key concepts of this section included:

1. Identifying the problem as powerlessness and unmanageability (Step One).
2. Identifying the solution as a power greater than ourselves (Step Two).
3. Identifying how that solution is brought about (Steps Three through Twelve).

The Steps all include spiritual principles and are aimed at developing or strengthening one's relationship with a higher power. In subsequent sessions, we took a closer look at the Steps and the basic and universal truths they represent.

### 1.2 *God of Our Understanding*

As discussed throughout this paper, the most important factor in Twelve Step recovery is the quality of one's relationship with a higher power. Each of the Twelve Steps aims at improving that relationship. From the pre-program survey, I gathered that each participant identified his or her higher power as "God." This information suggested to me it was reasonable to assume I could begin discussing God as this higher power and not assume some other conceptions of higher power were more relevant to any of the participants.

The goal of this first session was to make a clear statement about what we, as Catholics, mean when we say “God” or use the phrase “higher power.” I elaborated on a Roman Catholic conception of higher power, namely that the “fathomless mystery we call God has revealed himself to humankind as a Trinity of Persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>29</sup> While the Church may ascribe particular effects to one or the other divine Person, all effects of God’s action are produced by the three in common. Therefore, throughout this program it followed that we spoke of the Father as Creator of all that is; of the Son, the Word of God as our Savior or Redeemer; and, of the Holy Spirit, the love of God “poured into our hearts” as our Sanctifier.<sup>30</sup>

### 1.3 *The Kingdom of God*

In this next section, I discussed the Kingdom of God and how at the core of Christian faith and Christian life is the paschal mystery, the saving reality of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Further, the risen Christ, present in the hearts of believers through the Holy Spirit, carries the message of the Kingdom of God and reflects a God whose concern is mankind and whose coming rule means life and wholeness for people. I emphasized how in and through Jesus, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of God becomes present here and now. Through “Jesus’ *presence and action*, God has here and now entered actively into history in a wholly new way.”<sup>31</sup> I summarized by sharing that there are three ways of interpreting the Kingdom of God according to Pope Benedict in his book, *Jesus of Nazareth*: as Jesus Himself; as located deep within the believer; and, as being in close relationship to the Church.

### 1.4 *Steps One and Two*

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<sup>29</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 238-248.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 234-237.

<sup>31</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 60.

I then asked that the participants to consider with me the first two Steps in light of our understanding of God and the following points were made:

1. Step One breaks through the denial that hides the truth about lack of control and a life that has become unmanageable. Admitting powerlessness is an act of humility which begins the work of reestablishing a relationship with God. Without taking this first step it would be nearly impossible to come to know, or know again, God and his love and further, it would be impossible to love God and our neighbor, much less ourselves.
2. Admitting powerlessness reveals our dependency on God – not in defeat but in faith and is the best disposition to begin a spiritual journey. Step One opens the door to a new or renewed life, a new life in Christ who said, “I have come to save that which is lost.” “Lost” is the powerlessness or defeat someone experiences when their efforts alone have yielded little or nothing. Prompted by grace, admitting this becomes foundational for the establishment of a relationship with God who is the highest power and in whom all things are possible.
3. The God of our understanding, in the most mysterious way, has revealed his almighty power in the voluntary humiliation and Resurrection of his Son. In Christ’s resurrection and exaltation, the Father has shown us the immeasurable greatness of his power.
4. Entrusted to *this* Higher Power, addiction is now a potential encounter with salvation if we take this next Step. In Step Two, I emphasized that not just *any* power will do – only a “power greater than us” can restore us to sanity. For Catholics, this power is the same one we profess belief in; “God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth...,” and

the same one who “shows forth his mighty power by converting us from our sins and restoring us to his friendship by grace.”<sup>32</sup>

### Group Reflection and Discussion

I then asked the participants to turn to a handout with a collection of Scripture versus about God’s “power.” I asked them to read each of them and choose one that had particular meaning for them. They were then invited to share what it was that resonated and why.

(Appendix B)

### *1.5 Concluding Remarks*

The session concluded with my making some final comments aimed at setting the tone for the subsequent meetings. The concluding remarks included an acknowledgement of the distinct identity of this group as Catholics. An identification that makes possible the explicit claim that in the risen Christ we are somehow joined to him - and with one another, as part of Christ’s body.

### **Session 2 [2.0 hrs.]**

The second session commenced again by my asking the participants to join me in prayer:

1. A moment of silence followed by the Sign of the Cross.
2. I invited the participants to call to mind the presence of God.
3. I asked the participants to join me in the “Serenity Prayer” – this was the full-length version. (Appendix B)
4. We concluded with the Sign of the Cross and “Amen.”

### *2.1 Universal Call to Holiness*

The goal of this first section was to deepen appreciation for ways in which one’s spirituality can be rooted in specific ways in religion. As I mentioned early in the paper, despite

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<sup>32</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 275.*

the darkness of addiction, each of the baptized holds deep in the recesses of their minds and hearts the love of their Creator – a love they once knew and now seek at this critical point of embarking on change.

To deepen this appreciation, I spoke briefly about the spiritual mark of baptism as an ever-present invitation for new life. I emphasized that everyone is called to holiness in his or her own state of life, including a state of recovery. I reminded the participants that “being holy” is not reserved just for the clergy or for the pious and that we are all called to holiness and further that this holiness is not separate from our everyday lives. I emphasized that God gives the grace to make this so and all that is asked in return is that we are in communion with him and that we serve others. I concluded by making the point that recovery provides a path to holiness in that it allows us a conscious and tangible opportunity for rediscovering communion with God, in the fullness of his life and his love.

### Group Discussion

I then posed the following question to the group: *“How, if at all, is our universal call to holiness different from what is aimed for in recovery?”* I recorded responses that I could capture and included them in participant comment section of evaluations.

### *2.2 Step Three*

I then called the participants attention to Step Three and discussed how this Step is especially resonant with contemplating God’s calling us to holiness. In the Big Book, Bill W. writes, “the effectiveness of the whole A.A. program will rest upon how well and how earnestly we have tried to come to a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.”<sup>33</sup> In a specifically religious context what Step Three is suggesting is making the decision to turn

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<sup>33</sup> Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 34.

oneself over completely to the process of being transformed inwardly by God as revealed by Jesus who is forgiving, merciful, caring, and unfailing in his love for us.

I led the group in a brief discussion about the importance of completing thoroughly Steps One and Two, in order to be ready to make the *decision* called for in Step Three. In other words, if we are honest about our powerlessness, believe in a power – one who chose to reveal himself and his plan “of loving goodness,” in our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit, then we can, in Step Three, begin to actualize communion with a loving Father by surrendering our will for his. I went on to remark about the importance of making this surrender unconditionally, and once and for all, and by doing so, we give up those things that cause the “dis-ease” in our lives. Further, that it is in letting go that we find true serenity, true peace. As Christ taught us, we must die in order to live – die to all that is of self in order to live to all that is of God. This means his will, his providence, his love.

I also suggested to the participants that if they struggle with unconditional surrender, the best course of action is to pray to God for willingness, pray for both the *will to do* and the *strength to* accomplish his will. I used two stories to illustrate Step Three and the decision to turn one’s will over to God. The first is the story of Mary’s surrender in Luke 1:38, “Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word.” The second story was that of Peter in Luke 5:5 where he too let go of his own ideas and because the Lord said so, he “launched out into the deep” and “at thy word” he replied in complete surrender, “I’ll let down the net.”

### Group Discussion

We then had a brief discussion about the challenges to surrender as I asked participants to consider what obstacles they experience or experienced in making the decision called for in Step Three.

### *2.3 Spirituality Rooted in Religion*

In this section, I returned to address how our universal call to holiness can be a starting point for addressing the bifurcation of religious faith and practice from recovery and spirituality. I emphasized the distinctiveness of a Christian rooted spirituality that brings us into contact with the truths of revelation specifying who exactly God is, how he invites us into relationship with him and how to be in relationship with him. I explained that spiritual growth can be brought to its fullest when fortified by the liturgy, sacrament and prayer and that in subsequent sessions we will discuss how.

### Group Discussion

I asked the participants what they felt were some of the barriers, obstacles, challenges and/or resistances to integrating their religion and their spirituality. In the second group, I also gave each participant a sheet of paper to write these out in addition to discussing them here so that I could fully capture those as part of the evaluation. I noted the responses that were verbalized on white board so I could address them in subsequent sessions if appropriate.

To conclude this session, I called the participants' attention to a suggested "road map" for bridging the spirituality of the Twelve Steps with their Catholic faith. A "road map" is not an uncommon phrase in recovery for detailing how one goes about managing life without substances, including various tools and what they call "spiritual solutions," such as prayer, meeting attendance, and contact with others in the fellowship. This road map illustrated the

many opportunities and practices available within the Church and the Catholic faith to strengthen one's relationship with God as well as to support on-going conversion efforts. (Appendix B.4)

Of note, at the end of this session for Group II, one of the participants spontaneously asked if we could end with the "Our Father" so we gathered in a circle, held hands and all joined in prayer. Twelve Step meetings always end with the serenity prayer and in some areas of the country, especially the South, they end with the "Our Father." The participant that made the request also made the comment "since we started with the serenity prayer, why not end with the Lord's prayer."

### **Session 3 [2.0 hrs.]**

As with the previous two sessions, I began by asking the participants to join me in prayer. Before we started I explained that I chose this prayer as it invites God to work within our will to make us desire him and asks him to strengthen us in order to fulfill that desire. Then followed with:

1. A moment of silence followed by the Sign of the Cross.
2. I invited the participants to call to mind the presence of God.
3. I asked the participants to join me in "Saint Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit." (Appendix B.2)
4. We concluded with the Sign of the Cross and "Amen."

#### *3.1 Liturgy, Spirituality and the Twelve Steps*

Returning the participants' attention to the "road map" handed out at the previous session, I pointed to the prominent place of the liturgy in the spiritual life of a Catholic. In the liturgy, "the work of our redemption is accomplished, most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist."<sup>34</sup> It is where our spirituality originates and is constantly renewed. The liturgical life of the church provides a daily, weekly, and seasonal environment for spiritual direction of the

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<sup>34</sup> Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Intro., 2.

Christian community. I emphasized how, in the liturgical celebration, Jesus engages us in the very life of God and gives a distinct and unambiguous shape and form to our search for God and for wholeness. To specify how, I walked the participants through the Mass, highlighting how in the rituals of readings, prayers, hymns and actions we encounter visible signs that signify invisible divine things and then pointed some of those out. I further, noted that in every element of the liturgy, God is acting and providing ways for us to respond. I emphasized how our relationship with God is deepened through each liturgical action, and made reference where applicable to how these actions deepen what happens in one or more of the Twelve Steps.

I heavily relied on Fr. Jeremy Driscoll's easily accessible book, *What Happens at Mass*, to outline the ritual shape of the Mass. He wrote it as a non-academic book for any Catholic interested in understanding the Mass better. I found it to be a helpful resource as it defines, in a graspable way for the non-theologian, how God acts to save us in the events taking place in the Mass.

As I walked the participants through what happens at Mass, I made references to how the events taking place can correspond with one or the other of the Twelve Steps.

### 3.2 *The Introductory Rites*

The following were highlighted:

1. The entrance procession from sacristy to sanctuary symbolizes our entire journey of faith: The procession follows the Cross, as our lives are meant to follow the "Way of Jesus," illuminated by the Gospel approaching salvation in Christ made present to us in the here and now in the Eucharist on the altar.
2. Common prayer begins with a physical gesture reminding us of the bodily gift of Christ on the Cross as we make the sign of the Cross and recite the first profession of faith in the

Church: “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” In word and sign we are unambiguously naming and uniting ourselves (physical gesture of cross) with the power greater than ourselves that is at the center of everything we do in recovery.

3. Right in the first minute or two we are engaging in the work of the first three Steps. We bow our heads and genuflect in the direction of the tabernacle or monstrance in reverence of the Lord who is substantially and really present in the Eucharist (Step One). We express belief in that powerful presence, in hopeful anticipation of the very event of our salvation (Step Two); and, by saying “Amen” to the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we are saying ‘yes’ to this Higher Power’s presence in our life as we do in Step Three.
4. In the apostolic greeting we acknowledge the sacramental role of the priest representing Christ at the head of his body and as Christ leading the assembled in prayer. Throughout the Steps, we see the pronouns “we” and “our” rather than “I” and “my” placing recovery in the context of fellowship. Somewhat analogously, the “assembly” is our “we” as we are united through baptism, as a community, called together by God.
5. Following is the Penitential Rite where we confess to “Almighty God” – (Steps Four and Five) and to “our brothers and sisters.” (Steps Five, Eight, Nine, and Ten). We admit our wrongdoings – (Steps Five, Nine and Ten.) We ask “Blessed Virgin Mary and all the angels and saints and you, my brothers and sisters” to pray for us as we ask God to show us his mercy and grant us his salvation.
6. As we moved on to the “Gloria,” I pointed out that is not just an individual and personal exchange with an ambiguous source of power, rather united as a community, we praise and give thanks, we adore and glorify God the “almighty Father,” and then we turn to

address the “only begotten Son of the Father” who is the “lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,” and we ask for mercy. (Steps Six and Seven)

7. At the conclusion of the Introductory Rites is the Collect, where we again address God very specifically such as “almighty and ever-living;” we remember what God has done for us in the past; and we ask for something in the present – “O God, from whom all good things come, grant that we, who call on you in our need, may at your prompting discern what is right, and by your guidance do it.”<sup>35</sup> (Step 11 - “praying for knowledge of his will...”).

### *3.2 The Liturgy of the Word*

Moving to the Liturgy of the Word, I explained that God reveals himself and his plan for our salvation to us in both words and deeds. The following points were presented:

1. In the Liturgy of the Word, God speaks to us, giving himself to us in word and as I will discuss in the next session, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, God acts for us, giving himself to us in deed. I discussed that in Liturgy we meet God in sacred Word as we hear the story of our creation and of Israel’s history and then culminating in the story of Jesus Christ – himself the fulfillment of creation and history of Israel. Then we hear a reading from the writings of the Apostles, which forms a link between the Old Testament and the Gospel.
2. I then described how after a brief silence following the Second Reading, the assembly rises to its feet, again tangibly engaged with a spiritual event, as we sing over and over several times, “Alleluia!” Quoting from Fr. Driscoll’s book, - “Alleluia is a shout of praise. We sing this word now because in proclamation of the Gospel our risen Lord

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<sup>35</sup> Gueric DeBona, *Between the Ambo and the Altar: Biblical Preaching and the Roman Missal, Year A*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 186.

intensifies his presence in the assembly. We know it; we believe it; we are glad for it; we are on our feet; we are singing and we shall hang on his every word and deed.”<sup>36</sup> (Step Two – “Came to believe...”) Attempting to emphasize the texture and sacredness of what is happening in the Liturgy, I reminded the participants that in the reading of the Gospel, Jesus himself visits us in a very concrete form- speaking to our present day situation.

Letting that sink in, I went on to further remind them that when the Gospel is read, all that Jesus said and all that he did becomes present in the here and now – we are touched, healed, ministered to, as we receive the communication of our salvation.

### *3.3 The Steps and the Liturgy*

Moving on, I then suggested that all of the Steps are deepened in one way or the other by what happens (event) in the Liturgy of the Word as we come into intimate contact with our higher power; we learn about his love for us and his will for us; that he cares for us and can restore us; that we can talk to him and he will listen; and, that if we ask him to change us, he will.

I engaged the group in informal discussion about how the Liturgy of the Word might deepen a particular Step(s) or their recovery in general. My contribution to the discussion included how the Liturgy of the Word deepens Step Six as it presents an excellent opportunity to come to better know God in an intimate and personal way that helps move from belief in God to trust in God.

1. As our relationship grows with God, so too does our desire to be closer to him, to be more like him. This is especially true if we are also becoming more acquainted with God

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<sup>36</sup> Jeremy Driscoll, *What Happens at Mass*, 47.

as he is revealed through Sacred Scripture where we truly begin to know God and of His unconditional love for us. Many recovering people question what there is to “do” in this Step. Properly understood, Step Six is similar to Step One in that it emphasizes our dependence on God. As we acknowledge that we cannot change on our own but that we can allow our desire to change to cooperate with God’s desire to give us new life.

2. To be “entirely ready” is a tremendous act of faith. Like Jesus on the cross, there is nothing more to do except surrender and commit everything over to the compassion and wisdom of the loving Father. We take that leap of faith and trust in the “I am” of God’s presence, which is one of almighty power, able to remove even the most stubborn defects of the self, and which is one of love and mercy.
3. When we are finally willing to have our faults corrected by God they begin to disappear. Step Six, “Were entirely ready to have God remove all of these defects of character,” teaches practically what the Gospel passages say – “let it be done unto me!”

I reminded participants how in A.A. meetings, the fellowship actively listens to the stories of recovering addicts and in them hears their own story or a fragment of their own story. I then suggested that similarly, in the liturgy, when we actively listen to the Word and search for the connection between the pattern of our life and biblical patterns we discover important insights about ourselves that can help us grow in our relationship with God.

To conclude this session, I finished walking the participants through the rest of the Liturgy of the Word by sharing the following:

4. The homily is intended to illuminate some aspect of the readings, to connect it to the larger story of salvation history and then to the particular needs of the listeners. As the celebrant expounds on the Word, we make connections between what is happening in our

lives today and how Sacred Scripture holds the answers to our most confounding questions and challenges.

5. As we learned in the discussion about the Word, God has revealed something to us and invites our faithful response. We do so in the Profession of Faith succinctly expressing our Catholic belief. In both the Nicene and Apostles Creed we profess belief not in an idea or individual notion of God, but belief in the Father: “almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.” Belief in the Son: “the only Begotten Son of God..., not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.” “For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” Belief in the Holy Spirit: “who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.” We also profess belief in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church - the context in which the divine life of the Trinity is shared.<sup>37</sup>
6. Having been enlightened and shaped by the Word of God, the faithful are now ready to pray the general intercessions. Made a priestly people at our Baptism, we are called to concern not only for our own interests and needs, but for the whole Body of Christ, for the needs of others, and for the world in general. With our petition for our prayers to be heard, the Liturgy of the Word, in which God speaks to us, is concluded. Now the assembled are ready for the Liturgy of the Eucharist, in which God acts on our behalf, fulfilling the promises of the words.

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<sup>37</sup> Fr. Anthony Paone, “Apostle’s Creed” in *My Daily Bread* prayer book (New York: Confraternity of the Precious Blood, 2014).

This point in the presentation was optimal for engaging in Gospel contemplation and we did so for the remainder of the session.

### Group Exercise

The participants engaged in Gospel Contemplation for this exercise. I directed the participants to the outline for Gospel Contemplation and introduced the activity. I then read out loud and handed to each of them a print out of Luke 1:39-55. After about fifteen minutes I invited the participants to share any reflections on the experience. These were recorded as was possible.

We closed by coming together in a circle and saying the serenity prayer.

## **Session 4 [2.0hrs]**

I started this fourth session asking the participants to join me in prayer:

1. A moment of silence followed by the Sign of the Cross.
2. I invited the participants to call to mind the presence of God.
3. I asked the participants to join me in praying the “Angelus.” (Appendix B.2)
4. We concluded with the Sign of the Cross and “Amen.”

### *4.1 The Sacraments and the Twelve Steps*

The sacraments put us in living contact with Christ and are efficacious signs of God’s desire to touch and transform us and through them God does so. I gave an overview of the sacraments emphasizing their spiritual and practical orientation in life as through them God affirms and builds us up during our most significant transitions. I described them as formative and transformative of our inner lives through the realities they express. Further, I emphasized that the sacraments are not ritualizations of historical events but rather are deeply personal and active encounters in the present with the Risen Lord.

## 4.2 *The Holy Eucharist*

I endeavored to make this section as much of a discussion as possible. While I knew it would require some degree of catechesis, I did not want to lose the point of how deeply personal and intimate the reception of communion was. Thus, I was careful to engage the participants in a dialogue about communion. For instance, I was curious what the reception of the Eucharist meant to them. Has it meant anything in particular in recovery? I wanted to hear from them before I lectured some on it so as not to influence their expressions of its meaning.

### *Group Discussion Reflection*

The group was asked to reflect on two questions: What does receiving communion mean to you? Does it have any particular meaning or place in your recovery? I recorded the answers as was possible.

I then walked them through what happens in the Liturgy of the Eucharist covering the following:

1. This part of the liturgy begins with bringing of the gifts, which will become Christ's Body and Blood, to the altar. This procession brings forth the bread and wine with the assembled people's monetary offerings signifying sacrifice. The bread and wine brought forth are not purely natural symbols as is water, for instance in baptism. The wheat planted and harvested, the vines cared for and cultivated are the cooperation between the Creator and humans.<sup>38</sup> The priest says: "Blessed are you Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life. Blessed are you Lord God

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<sup>38</sup> Jeremy Driscoll, *What Happens at Mass*, 65.

of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become our spiritual drink.”<sup>39</sup>

2. The priest adds a drop of water to the wine, again symbolic of the union of Christ’s divinity (the wine) and our humanity (the drops of water). With deep reverence for the significance of the Eucharist to spirituality, I emphasized that the gifts we bring also symbolize our lives as we bring them and place them in the hands of Christ (by placing them in the hands of the priest). This action is essentially saying to Christ, take this (us), do something with this (us), make our lives be what your life was and is. The priest washes his hands in preparation for what is to come – Christ will make the hands of the priest his own hands that will take up the gifts, transform them, and offer them to the father.<sup>40</sup>
3. Having joined our sacrifice with the sacrifice of Christ, we then pray that our sacrifice is acceptable to God, the almighty Father.<sup>41</sup> With this, the assembly is now poised for the Eucharistic prayer - the heart of the liturgy. The introductory dialogue establishes that this prayer is the prayer of the baptized and ordained, offered in the presence of God, and has thanksgiving as its central focus. There are a number of different parts to it and a close examination of the ritual shape and texts reveal a momentum building towards a climax whereby the whole creation joins the whole of heaven in an act of praise directed to God the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 139.

4. In the epiclesis, the Church asks the Father to send his Holy Spirit on the bread and wine, so that by his power they become the body and blood of Jesus Christ and so that those who take part in the Eucharist may be one body and one spirit. The institution narrative recalls the Last Supper and leads the people to acclaim their faith. In the anamnesis is the remembrance of the saving acts of Jesus, remembrance meaning to enter into it and bring its power into the present.
5. The intercessions make clear that the Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the entire Church in heaven and earth. The great prayer concludes with a doxology, by which the glory of God is expressed and then affirmed by the people's acclamation of "Amen." The Eucharistic Prayer leads the faithful to the Eucharistic table. It begins with the Lord's prayer, joining all of the assembled voices to pray for the coming of God's kingdom and to ask for God's help, for the forgiveness of sins and to bring the joy of heaven. This is followed by the Sign of Peace, offered first by the priest and then to one another as a sign of Christ's peace.
6. I made a point of stressing that the peace we extend is not an individual one, but the peace of Christ, and by extending peace to one another, we symbolize our reconciliation with one another before coming forward for communion. Giving the sign of peace to another in the liturgy is a ritual exchange, the phrase "peace be with you," and the gesture of an embrace or handshake, signify love for one another in Christ.
7. As the celebrant breaks the bread or host the assembled sing the "Agnus Dei." The words, "Lamb of God" address Jesus himself; the Passover Lamb whose body has been sacrificed, whose blood has been poured out for the forgiveness of our sins, "you take

away the sins of the world....”<sup>42</sup> We ask him for mercy and on the last time we ask for the larger gift, “Grant us peace....”<sup>43</sup> The breaking of the host reminds us that Christ was broken on the Cross and it reminds us that this happened in order to give us new life.

8. To begin what happens next, the distribution of the sacred gifts, the priest holds up the *broken* bread and says, “Behold the Lamb of God.” “Behold him who takes away the sins of the world, happy are we who are called to his supper.”<sup>44</sup> The broken bread seen before us and the wine poured out in our presence is nothing less than Christ himself.
9. In the words of St. Ambrose from the Catechism; “Be convinced that this is not what nature has formed, but what the blessing has consecrated. The power of the blessing prevails over that of nature, because by the blessing nature itself is changed.... Could not Christ’s word, which can make from nothing what did not exist, change existing things into what they were not before? It is no less a feat to give things their original nature than to change their nature.”<sup>45</sup>

At this point in the lecture, I asked that we pause and contemplate what we just heard, inviting both silence and sharing as each are moved. Then continue:

10. In the Big Book Appendix II, which deals with more clearly defining what was meant by the phrase “spiritual experience (it was changed to spiritual awakening),” the term *change* is used repeatedly. It states referring to the recovering alcoholic, “He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a

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<sup>42</sup> Jeremy Driscoll, *What Happens at Mass*, 125.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>44</sup> Confraternity of the Precious Blood, “The Order of Mass” in the *Catholic Liturgical Lectionary* (Catholic Book Publishing, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, 1375.

change could hardly have been brought by himself alone.”<sup>46</sup> The key concept in the Appendix as well as the whole of the Big Book is *change*. This *change* is the result of having worked the Steps and improved one’s relationship with a higher power. This relationship is realized in its fullness in the reception of the Eucharist. The Big Book is essentially saying what we know from revelation that our lives are incomplete without the presence of God and God becomes fully present to us in Jesus and Jesus becomes fully present to us in the bread and wine.

11. God gave himself to us in the Incarnation and in the Eucharist – two expressions of the immense love of God. “Communion” is a word that expresses God’s total self-giving love. It contains the truth that in and through Jesus, God wants to teach us, inspire us and instruct us, and he wants to be one with us. God created in our hearts a yearning for this communion that no one and nothing but God can and wants to fill. Addiction is a form of looking for something other than God to fulfill our deepest yearnings. We must participate in the Eucharistic celebration and live a Eucharistic life to have that yearning satisfied – there is no other way.

Returning to the outline, we move on to what happens next:

12. All the people pray together directly to Christ who is held up before them and borrow their words from the centurion who had asked Jesus to cure his paralyzed son: “Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed (Mt 8:8).”<sup>47</sup> This prayer is absolutely resonant with recovery - change existing things from what they were not before.

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<sup>46</sup> Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 567.

<sup>47</sup> Jeremy Driscoll, *What Happens at Mass*, 126.

13. As the assembly processes forward to receive communion we are reminded of the initial procession at this same Mass – the bread and wine that were brought forward and handed over to Christ are now, transformed and handed back to us. In other words, the lives we brought forward are handed back completely transfigured and transformed.<sup>48</sup> This is much to contemplate and so the prayer following communion is a silent one. We contemplate the entire mystery of the event that just took place, “the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me,”<sup>49</sup> -a profoundly intimate and personal conversion in our hearts.<sup>50</sup>

14. The Communion Rite concludes with the Prayer after Communion which is a prayer on our behalf by the priest, that the communion we just received brings us spiritual strength and growth in holiness to which we respond, “Amen.” The concluding rite signals the Mass is ended and includes a final blessing and a dismissal that serves as a reminder to live out our call “to go in peace...” to be the bread for the world.

I concluded this section reading from the Catechism that the “Most Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist” is the very center and culmination of Christian life, is the source and summit of all preaching of the Gospel and in it is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely, Christ himself.<sup>51</sup>

### 4.3 Reconciliation

This next didactic emphasized the Sacrament of Reconciliation, not as a replacement for Steps Four and Five and it should not be confused as such but as an opportunity, deepening the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Gal. 2:20 (NAB).

<sup>50</sup> Jeremy Driscoll, *What Happens at Mass*, 130.

<sup>51</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, 1324.

work of these Steps, to heal our relationship with God, ourselves and others. Not too unlike Step Four's inventory, in Confession we recognize our human limitations and failings and we express our intention to make reparation for those failings. Thus the Sacrament is a natural extension of the Step, while not a replacement. The following points were made:

1. Twelve Step spirituality emphasizes how our human limitations have damaged relationships. The Sacrament of Reconciliation does that and more – it heals and it reconciles one with God and the Church as it communicates the forgiveness and reconciliation embodied in the Paschal Mystery. We believe that in Christ Jesus we are led back to the Father, that the alienation of sin is overcome and that new life can be found.
2. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the concrete expression of the restoration of a positive relationship where we act on what we know, not an abstract knowing, but a *knowing* that Jesus Christ takes on our sins and transforms us through mercy and forgiveness.
3. The sacrament also consecrates both the personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance and satisfaction as it “makes sacramentally present Jesus’ call to conversion.”<sup>52</sup> Conversion is the literal “turning” from acting on our will and realigning ourselves with the will of God – something the Third Step asks the recovering person to make the decision to do. Again, giving up something to get something greater. The sacrament is best understood as part of an ongoing reconciliation process involving “inner conversion of heart” and “profound change of the whole person.”

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 1423.

4. Steps Four and Five are considered to be the beginning of the “action Steps.” As with the Sacrament of Penance, they require the individual to look honestly at themselves and evaluate the thoughts and behaviors that have caused damage to self, others and God. Admitting the truth is crucial for both the Step and the Sacrament for without it true relationship with God, oneself and others becomes impossible. However, acting on the simple truth that God loves us as sinners *however we are*, but too much to keep us *as we are*, then we can discover another benefit of God’s almighty power which is freedom from the relationship damaging attributes in our character.
5. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the fellowship of A.A. consider the encounter of self-revelation of sins or wrongs committed as an essential part of the process which leads to spiritual awakening, conversion, and reconciliation with self, others and God. This self-revelation finds particular expression through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Fifth Step respectively. Both Sacrament and Step provide the opportunity for recovering people to acknowledge those actions and attitudes that divide them from God, others and themselves and are, in effect, opportunities for discerning and confessing or sharing those things that make up a pattern of estrangement.
6. While there are some similarities, it is important to point out that the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Step Five are not one and the same. The Fifth Step stands on its own merits and is the recovering person’s own story and not a sacramental confession. There are however, similarities in the effect of both the Sacrament and a Fifth Step in that they renew a sense of hope in the individual that a new way of life is possible.
7. Both the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Step Five are the beginning of true kinship between man and God. It is often at the conclusion of a Fifth Step that someone

discovers a compassionate God who understands and forgives. Fifth Steps for Catholics are opportunities for remembering the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation.

I then acknowledged that the momentum towards transformation continues beyond reconciling with God and extends to reconciling with others. The following points were made:

8. Now that our relationship with self and God has become more firmly established and as we have an increasing knowledge of God's desire for us to live in the image of Jesus we move into Steps Eight and Nine and start the work of repairing relationships with others. Our relationship building with our Higher Power would be incomplete without these Steps as we would be unable to love God with our whole selves. Through baptism we are intimately connected to one another through Christ. To be willing to reconcile with 'other' is to recognize Christ in them. Fortified by compassion and inspired by the life of Jesus we courageously embark on the Ninth Step where we make direct amends to others.
9. The wisdom of the Twelve Steps reveals itself once again in Step Ten. In order to grow spiritually we have to continually take a personal inventory and when wrong promptly admit it. A daily examination of conscience and regular Confession can deepen the Tenth Step as they help us stay aware and conscious of the quality of our relationship with God. Religious do this as part of their regular spiritual practice. We do not have to be religious to be inclined to have regular examination of conscience as part our on-going spiritual growth. We just have to be willing to acknowledge that God is in every human experience from the mundane to the magnificent. He is in our daily shortcomings and he is in our greatest failings. If we look at them, bring them to our consciousness in regular and meaningful ways, we can better see what God is revealing to us within them.

### Group Exercise

The participants were asked to engage in a brief examination of consciousness. I borrowed a resource from Ignatian Spirituality and asked them each to find a quiet place to sit alone and engage in the following:

1. Place yourself in God's presence. Give thanks for God's for God's great love for you.
2. Pray for grace to understand how God is acting in your life.
3. Review your day – recall specific moments and your feelings at the time.
4. Reflect on what you did, said or thought in those instances. Were you drawing closer to God, or further away?
5. Look toward tomorrow – think of how you might collaborate more effectively with God's plan. Be specific and conclude with the "Our Father."

When everyone completed the exercise we reconvened to close the session with the serenity prayer.

### **Session 5 [2.0 hrs.]**

I started this fifth session asking the participants to join me in prayer:

1. A moment of silence followed by the Sign of the Cross.
2. I invited the participants to call to mind the presence of God.
3. I asked the participants to join me in the "Prayer of St. Francis." [Appendix B.2]
4. We concluded with the Sign of the Cross and "Amen."

#### *5.1 Prayer*

I began this session with a general description of prayer as an intimate and personal form of communication with God that often includes a request or expression of gratitude. Further, it is an intimate dialogue that actualizes and deepens communion with God through specifically formulated prayers brought by the teachings of the Church.

I then wondered out loud what is different or unique or remarkable even about the specifically formulated prayers of the Church and further whether these might be relevant to recovery in which prayer is so central. I noted some of the responses and then made the following points about prayer and the prayers of the Church:

1. When we pray we always begin with God, not ourselves and when we pray it is an engagement with the Trinity – God the Almighty Father, Christ who frees us from sin, and, the Holy Spirit who comes to aid us in our weakness. Although as we begin to pray it seems it is on our own initiative, it is always God’s initiative within us and before we have spoken a word, God in his inexhaustible love for us comes to our aid in the Holy Spirit as we see in Saint Paul’s Letter to the Romans; “The Spirit to comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to prays we ought but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groaning.”<sup>53</sup> In the Big Book, Bill W. acknowledges the “God dwelling within us...” and prayer is our response to God who is prompting us from within.
2. Through the formulaic prayers taught us by the Church, we enter into the presence of God dwelling within us in particular and richly texturized ways as we adore God, acknowledge his almighty power, as we bring our thanks, our petitions our sorrows and our sins. We pray directly to God, and to those close to God - his intercessors: the angels and saints. We pray to the Blessed Mother enlisting her aid in bringing our petitions to her Son. We pray as a community and with all members of the Mystical Body.
3. Our Catholic prayers draw upon the words of Christ, of Scripture, and of the writings of the saints, all of which are guided by the Holy Spirit. These prayers inform and inspire

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<sup>53</sup> Rom. 8:26 (NAB).

our communication with God and nourish and express our relationship to Him as they help us to know Him.

### 5.2 Prayer and Recovery

#### 4. Distinctly Catholic prayer is relevant to recovery in that:

- a. It puts us in touch with our own weakness, powerlessness and unworthiness.

Addictive thinking wants us to believe that power, success, jobs, possessions, and the like will make us happy. Jesus rejected the devil's temptations for the same kind of things and instead chose God's way, a way of humility, powerlessness and littleness. When we unite our prayer with Jesus we find that it is in this recognition of our powerlessness, our littleness, our humility that we truly experience peace and joy.

- b. We can go a step further when we speak about prayer as an expression of our relationship with God. Jesus teaches his followers to enter into *his* relationship with God as in the "Lord's Prayer:"

*"Father..."* (We pray as God's children approaching our merciful Father, trusting in his will);

*"Who art in heaven..."* (Heaven - not so much a place as a way of being);

*"Hallowed be thy name..."* (Holy and revered);

*"Thy kingdom come..."* (The decisive victory over sin and death);

*"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven..."* (In the Eucharistic sacrifice the will of God is entirely accomplished and done, just as it is in heaven);<sup>54</sup>

*"Give us each day our daily bread..."* (praying for sustenance, forgiveness and freedom from the grip of addiction);

*"And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who trespass against us..."* (The Father sees us in his son, and we forgive as he forgave);

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<sup>54</sup> Jeremy Driscoll, *What Happens at Mass*, 116.

“*And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil...*” (Even though we have peace in this moment, we know we lack the wisdom and strength to battle the temptations that might lead us away from him).<sup>55</sup>

5. Catholic prayer has an “Easter” quality to it. Although certain of our struggles will persist in life – we will feel sorrow, frustration and pain but we will experience these differently when we have met the risen Jesus in prayer. We are stronger, more persevering, more hopeful because his love is stronger than all of our struggles. As we read in Paul’s Letter to the Romans:

“For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.”<sup>56</sup>

I then took some time to discuss what the above means beyond the fact that as Catholics we have these prayers formulated by the Church that reflect our particular belief system.

### 5.3 *Mystery*

6. In prayer, as in the liturgy and the sacraments, we do more than simply communicate with God – we *encounter* God. When we encounter God in prayer we are taken from an intellectual knowledge of God’s existence and essentially out of ourselves to something beyond ourselves. In prayer, we are doing more than communicating with a meaningful figurehead whom we hope hears our petitions, we are living that relationship. The liturgy has a form, the sacraments have a form and prayer has a form all of which deliver a *content*. When we pray as Jesus taught us, and as has been given form by the Church, we enter into *Jesus’ relationship with God*, which delivers the content for which it is intended.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>56</sup> Rom. 6:3-4 (NAB).

7. One way to think about what is meant here is to consider what is meant when we talk about “mystery.” In Catholic spirituality “mystery” actually means something other than the general use of it. The apostle Paul used the word *mystery* as key to understanding what happened in Christ. The central mystery of our faith, according to Paul, is the cross of Christ. He calls the cross a *mystery* to express that something was hidden in the cross which we cannot understand without its being revealed.<sup>57</sup> Fr. Driscoll writes that “a mystery is a concrete something that when you bump into it, it puts you in contact with a divine reality.” Then he goes on to share the following examples: 1) The cross is a concrete something; in it is the Lord of glory; 2) Being plunged into the waters of our baptism and brought up three times is a concrete something; in it is hidden a believer’s dying and rising with Christ; 3) The bread and wine of the Eucharist are concrete something’s; in them are hidden the very body and blood of Christ.<sup>58</sup>
8. Looking again at the Lord’s Prayer; “Our Father, who art in heaven” – In this prayer, we are not vaguely addressing ourselves to God, rather together with the Son and the Spirit, as established by the ‘new and eternal covenant,’ we personally address the Father, who was revealed as such by the Son, in the presence of the Spirit who proceeded from the Father. Again, referring to Fr. Driscoll:

“When Jesus teaches us the name “Father” for our most intimate address to God – in imitation of his own – we have just one more instance of the miracle of Christ’s incarnation, the miracle in which finite limited forms are made capable of bearing infinite divine realities. The finite, limited form – in this case the name “Father” – bends under the weight of the divine reality it carries and is re-defined beyond its limitations.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Jeremy Driscoll, *What Happens at Mass*, 2.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 113.

“When we pray this prayer and acknowledge a Father in heaven, we are already there where we are meant to forever be, within Love’s eternal flow. Paradoxically, then, in this moment heaven is revealed as interior to us rather than somehow hopelessly beyond us. And yet heaven placed within us is not our doing and not a part of our original nature. It is placed within us when the Father hands us the body and blood of His Son as our food and drink. In Christ heaven and earth are joined together forever.”<sup>60</sup>

There is much to contemplate here. When we pray, in particular when we pray the formulaic prayers of the Church – we are taken out of ourselves and beyond ourselves to the content expressed within them. This understanding points to a fundamental difference between a spirituality dislodged from religion and one rooted in religion.

#### *5.4 Prayer and The Steps*

To bring the participants back to our context of recovery, I then moved the discussion on prayer to the Twelve Steps and discussed in particular a few of them where prayer was especially significant, although I was careful to point out that each Step is elevated by prayer.

1. In Step Six we prepare, we get ready for God to remove those things that stand in the way of full relationship with Him, with ourselves and with others. This can be a confusing Step because it lacks specificity of “what to do.” Properly understood, Step Six is similar to Step One in that it emphasizes our dependence on God – we cannot change on our own but we can allow our desire to change to cooperate with God’s desire to give us new life. To be “entirely ready” is a tremendous act of faith. Like Jesus on the cross, there is nothing more to do except surrender and commit everything over to the compassion and wisdom of the loving Father. In Step Six we are encouraged to do the same - entrust ourselves completely to God’s mercy.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Step Six contains the wisdom that as we increasingly recognize our desire to be more like God, we also become increasingly aware of not quite being ready to give up certain things. I suggested to the participants that wrestling with this Step is part of how to accomplish its completion. One helpful example I mentioned is found in the *Confessions* where St. Augustine writes about his sexual struggles as a youth.

2. At the time of his conversion, St. Augustine experienced the tension of wanting freedom from his sexual urges while at the same time not quite feeling quite ready to give them up. We see this tension as he writes “Lord make me pure...but not yet.”<sup>61</sup> Augustine’s dilemma has deep resonance not just with recovering people, but with all of us. We have attachments to temporal things as well as some weaknesses of character that maintain a strong appeal. Eventually though, we realize these do not bring us the peace, the freedom, the serenity we long for and when we couple that with the knowledge that alone we are powerless over them we are ready to ask for help.

I then turned to Scripture.

3. In his letter to the Romans, Paul gives voice to the struggle ensuing within us in Step Six.

“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold into slavery to sin. What I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate.”<sup>62</sup>

“For those who live according to the flesh are concerned with the things of the spirit. The concern of the flesh is death, but the concern of the spirit is life and peace. For the concern of the flesh is hostility toward God; it does not submit to the law of God, nor can it; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Augustin, *Conf.*, 7.

<sup>62</sup> Rom. 7:14-15 (NAB).

<sup>63</sup> Rom. 8:5-9 (NAB).

4. If we read “flesh” as our “old self,” Saint Paul is telling us that at the Cross, God broke the power of sin. So even though we retain the “flesh,” it is alien to us in our new being which is life in the Spirit. Halfway through the Twelve Steps, Step Six has us well on our way to transformation and the more stable this transformation the more alien our old lives feel. Increasingly, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, we are enjoying not only a new life in recovery but also a new relationship with God.
5. One last word about Step Six, our faith teaches us that God has no interest in using our shortcomings or character defects or any of our failings against us. On the contrary, he willingly accepts all those who return to him as long as they ask. He is open to our advances but does not force us to do so, instead he waits for us to be ready and willing.
6. The first thing to strike us about Step Seven is the word “humbly.” It is humility that enables us to approach God just as we are – with all of our defects, with all of our shortcomings. This is the essence of trust in God. Humility is the outgrowth of our readiness to move out from ourselves and towards God and what we can be if we are willing to follow his will for us.
7. St. Theresa identifies humility with truth. We are at our most humble and our most truthful when we acknowledge that God has seen us in the worst version of ourselves and loves us more than ever in spite of this. God is the good shepherd looking for his lost sheep and he wants to find us as much, if not more, than we want to find him.

### Group Reflection

To sum up the movement accomplished in Step Seven I asked the participants to close their eyes and recall to themselves their experience of “hitting bottom,” or a close approximation of the time when they realized they felt the most distant from themselves, others and from God.

After a few minutes, I read aloud Psalm 22:1-5:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
The words of my groaning do nothing to save me.  
My God, I call by day but you do not answer,  
At night, but I find no respite.”<sup>64</sup>

I paused for a few moments and said that this is where they were when they started their spiritual journey, where their recovery began, when they were at the first Step. I then continued:

“Yet you, the Holy One,  
who make your home in the promises of Israel,  
in you our ancestors out their trust,  
they trusted and you set them free.  
To you they called for help and were delivered;  
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.”

I asked them to leave that image and turn to an image of themselves today. After a minute or so, I asked them to open their eyes. I shared with them the following interpretation from Henri Nouwen’s book on spiritual direction: “Psalm 22: 1-5, is a prayer of abandonment simultaneously echoing the experience of the people of Israel and the centerpiece of Christian spirituality. When Jesus uttered the first words of the Psalm on the Cross, total aloneness and full acceptance touched each other.<sup>65</sup> While death was witnessed, life was affirmed. Where God’s absence was most loudly expressed, God’s presence was most profoundly revealed.”<sup>66</sup>

I explained to the participants that addiction has brought us to the Cross, to the experience of total aloneness. “It is in our longing for the absent God that we discover the footprints of the Divine One. It is into this mystery of divine darkness and divine light – God’s

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<sup>64</sup> Psalm 22:15 (New American Bible).

<sup>65</sup> Henri Nouwen with Michael J. Christensen and Rebecca J. Liard, *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 79.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

absence and God's presence – that we enter when we pray.”<sup>67</sup> I shared that as we work the first six Steps, we are traversing that transition from God's absence to God's presence.

In Step Seven then, we ask God to concretize that transition by removing those defects of character that keep us tied to the darkness. By taking this request to prayer, we return to the Cross and go *beyond* the darkness to the light of God.

In both groups I ran out of time before I could complete the full agenda I had for this session on prayer. In the first Group, I had to conclude the session before presenting this final section on Step Eleven and before engaging the group in the *Lectio Divina* I had planned. In the second group, I had a little more time and so was able to present the following on Step Eleven but ran out of time before the *Lectio Divina*. The following points were made with regard to prayer and Step Eleven:

8. More than any other Step, Eleven most directly addresses our relationship with God and further how to maintain that relationship. Up to this point the Steps have acknowledged that God is power, that he cares, and that he desires a relationship with us. In Step Eleven we acknowledge that God also has a *will* for us. The God of our understanding is not a detached abstract concept – he is interested in us and wants a deep and personal relationship with us. In his book about the Twelve Steps and spirituality, “*Breathing Under Water*,” Richard Rohr says that “people’s willingness to find God in their struggle with life-*and let it change them*-is their deepest and truest obedience to God’s eternal will.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, we live according to God’s will when we are willing to find God

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Rohr, *Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the Twelve Steps* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2011), 103.

not only in our struggles but in our joys, in our relationships, in our encounters, in every experience.

9. In the same section of the chapter on Step Eleven, Rohr quotes the following by Thomas Merton, “The will of God is not a ‘fate’ to which we must submit, but a creative act in our life that produces something absolutely new, something hitherto unforeseen by the laws and established patterns. Our cooperation consists not solely in conforming to external laws, but in opening our wills to this mutually creative act.”<sup>69</sup> By bringing exactly who we are at this moment in time to prayer and meditation, trusting that the Kingdom of God is also within the same moment, we are finally allowing ourselves true relationship with God, ourselves and others.

To conclude this session on prayer, I planned to engage the participants in *Lectio Divina* on a passage from Scripture. However, both groups ran out of time before we were able to do this. We concluded by coming together and saying the serenity prayer.

### **Session 6 [2.0]**

#### *Experiential – Mass Attendance*

Before we headed out I read the following:

“The Liturgy is a radiant expression of the paschal mystery, in which Christ draws us to himself and calls us to communion... the concrete way in which the truth of God’s love in Christ encounters us, attracts us and delights us, enabling us to emerge from ourselves and drawing us towards our true vocation, which is love,” showing us the true nature of Christian liturgical life – Veritas Splendor “a glimpse of heaven on earth,” a heavenly happening so to say. The beauty of liturgy then, lies, not so much in what we do or how interesting and satisfying it becomes to us, as much as how deeply we are drawn into something that already happens which is profoundly divine and liberative. It is greater than us and carries with it a totally transforming effect, which we often cannot fully grasp. It is Christ’s paschal victory celebrated in heaven and on earth.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>70</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, from his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation - *Sacramentum Caritatis* (n.35); Quoted by Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith in *Sacred Liturgy: The Source and Summit of the Life and the Mission of the Church*, Alcuin Reid, Ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), Kindle Edition Loc. 204.

Following the attendance at Mass the participants engaged in group reflection with the aim of deepening their experience. The following questions were handed out to guide reflection though all were invited to share reflections of their own inspiration:

1. What experiences during the Mass did you find most relevant to your recovery?
2. Was there a word or phrase that jumped out at you in today's reading?
3. What did the readings remind you of in your life at this particular moment?
4. Are there any specific experiences of forgiveness that you have taken away from today's Liturgy?
5. Did the Liturgy inspire any gratitude in particular?
6. Did the liturgy inspire hope?

Following Mass attendance, we reconvened for group reflection. Participant's responses were collected and recorded and will be reflected in the appendix. To conclude the program, I thanked the participants for their participation and we came together a final time in a circle and recited the serenity prayer.

## CHAPTER V

### Project Evaluation and Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to develop a catechetical program for Catholics in Twelve Step recovery that guided the integration of their belief system with the spirituality of their recovery. I attempted to accomplish this by taking some of the key concepts in Twelve Step spirituality and recasting them in light of some fundamental aspects of Catholic faith and practice. Overall, the program aimed to improve the participant's knowledge and understanding of the Liturgy, the Sacraments and prayer and their relevance to recovery spirituality.

In order to determine whether this purpose was achieved, it was necessary to formulate a way to survey the participants and then collect and analyze the data. Several considerations went into the choices of methods to accomplish this. First, I had to consider that the sample size of the participants was expected to be small, which would limit the type of statistical analysis that could be done. I also had to consider the possibility that one or more of the participants might be absent for one or more of the sessions as they were scheduled over consecutive weeks. Fortunately, attendance was very good. The total number of participants was [n=12], for the purposes of this project I refer to them as a sample group. Second, without the benefit of having a larger survey to compare my group to, I would need to research what possible comparisons I might draw from other statistics that might add to the evaluation. Third, I had to consider the catechetical mission of the program making it necessary to evaluate change in the participant's knowledge of how the liturgy, sacraments and prayer enhance spirituality and the likelihood this knowledge will lead to change in their personal beliefs, attitudes, practices and perceptions. The fourth consideration was that spiritual and religious experiences are abstract and deeply individual in nature and are hard to measure reliably.

Lastly, I considered what I wanted to know. To get clarity on this I returned to the problem in ministry with which I began this project. To reiterate: “there is a need for a resource or guide for Catholics in treatment or early recovery to support their connecting their Catholic identity with the spiritual dimension of addiction and recovery.” What I endeavored to know then was whether the program served to support Catholics in recovery with the bringing together of their Catholic faith and practice and their understanding of the Twelve Step spirituality of their recovery.

These considerations along with a review of several methods of evaluation led me to choose the following means of evaluating the project.

1. Participant Data Form – Participants were asked to respond to four categories of questions: demographics; Twelve Step involvement; religious involvement; and, efforts to bridge spirituality and religion. (Appendix A.1)
2. Initial On-on-One Interview – Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions during an individual meeting with myself. (Appendix A.2)
3. Post-Program Questionnaire – At the end of the last session, each participant completed a learning self-assessment in which they rated both their knowledge of topics from the presentation and the likelihood of engaging in certain activities before the program and then after the program. (Appendix A.3)
4. Program Evaluation Form – Each participant anonymously evaluated the presentation and facilitator. (Appendix A.4)

In this chapter I will review the data gathered and will summarize the results. In the first part of the chapter, I will provide data points about each participant derived from review of both the *Participant Data Forms* and the *Initial One-on-One Interviews*. In the second part, I will

review and summarize the results of the *Post Program Questionnaire*. In the third part, I will review the results of the *Program Evaluation* and in the fourth part, I will offer my conclusions and will offer suggestions for future consideration.

### *The Participants*

I developed the *Participant Data Form* with the goal of comparing some key data points of my sample group with statistics obtained from A.A. and from the Catholic Church in the U.S. in order to determine whether they were a fair representation. Following the demographic questions, I devised two questions inquiring how important spirituality and religion are to each participant and how they engage with both or either of these. Though Twelve Step recovery is considered a “spiritual program,” I did not want to assume that spirituality is always important to the individual and further, how important.

I then wanted to ascertain the importance of working the Steps to each of the participants. The recruitment criteria only required that the individual be in Twelve Step recovery and did not require they actually “work the Steps,” though presumably many do. The third category similarly addressed the participant’s religious faith and practice. The criteria only required that the individual “identify” as Catholic and not specifically be practicing or active in their faith. In the final category I asked about the participant’s efforts to bridge their religion with their recovery spirituality.

In terms of demographics, I compared my very small sample group with A.A.’s 2014 member survey.<sup>1</sup> Once every three to four years, A.A.’s General Service Office conducts a random survey of its membership from the U.S. and Canada. More than 6,000 members participated in the 2014 survey and the following represent some relevant data comparisons.

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<sup>1</sup> A.A. World Services, Inc., “2014 Membership Survey” (New York: A.A. General Service Conference Approved Literature).

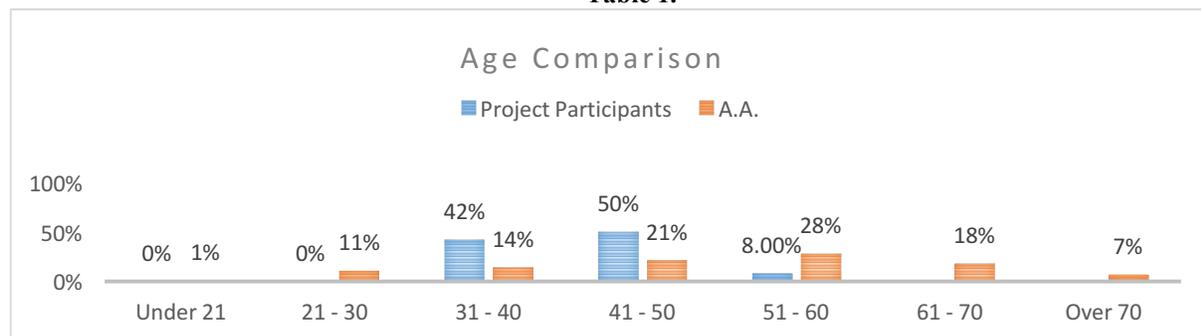
A total of seven men and five women participated in this ministry project. This rather closely correlated with the same A.A. gender statistic where 62% are male and 38% are female. In terms of composition, 11 were White/Caucasian and 1 was African-American. This too, closely correlated with A.A. whose composition reflects the following:

<u>White</u>	<u>89%</u>
<u>Black</u>	<u>4%</u>
<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>Native American</u>	<u>1%</u>
<u>Other</u>	<u>2%</u>

A.A. General Services Conference –Approved literature

Next, I looked at the age of participants. I chose to ask an age range rather than specific age to provide an extra layer of confidentiality. The following represents the age ranges present in the study:

**Table 1.**

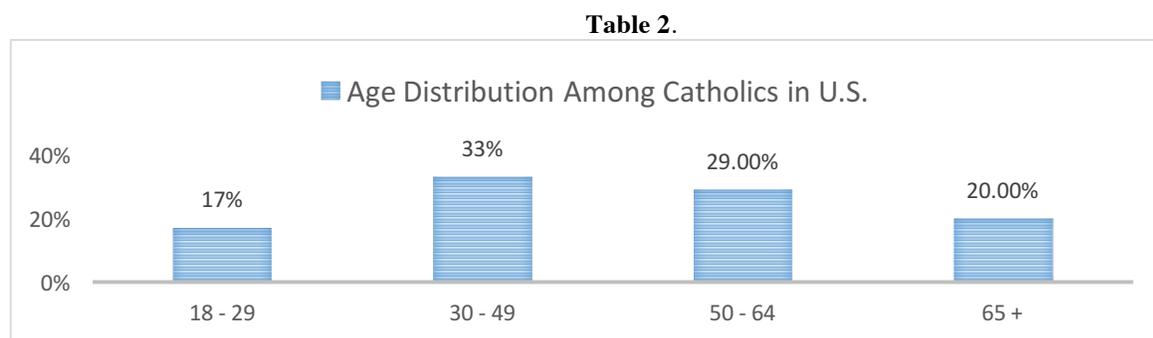


The largest range present was (41-50) year-olds which comprised 50% of the participants followed closely by (31- 40) year-olds who comprised 42% and only one participant comprising the remaining 8% representing the (51- 60) year-old range. I compared my sampling with A.A. membership in the same age categories as the graph in Table 1. shows.

With a considerably larger sampling of 6,000, A.A. membership understandably represented a broader range. As the graph demonstrates, the (51 – 60) range is A.A. ’s largest group where mine was in the (41–50) year olds. One possible explanation for this, other than the

sample size difference, could be the way my participants were recruited. My participants were not recruited from A.A. membership but from treatment facilities, addictions professionals, pastoral and spiritual care professionals.

There were no participants under the age of 30 years old and it is unclear exactly what this represents for this sample, if anything. However, I did review 2014 Pew Research data and found the median age of Catholic adults to be 49 years old and just 17% of Catholics to be under 30. The median age of my participants was 45 years old. Table 2. shows age statistics for the Catholic Church in the U.S. according to the Pew Research Center's 2014 *Religious Landscape Study*<sup>2</sup>:



It is possible that having no participants under the age of 30 is reflective of another Pew study on religion among Millennials in 2010 that found the under 30's considerably less religious than older Americans.<sup>3</sup> While no specific conclusions can be drawn from this comparison, it does reflect that there are some similarities supporting this group as a sample.

Regarding education, only one had no college, two had some college and the remaining nine had at least a college degree, three of which were graduate degrees. The final demographic question inquired whether the participant had been to formal treatment in addition to Twelve

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, *Religious Landscapes Study 2014*, [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org) (accessed October 13, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center, Forum on Religion & Public Life: *Religion in the Millennial Generation*, February 2010 [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org) (accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

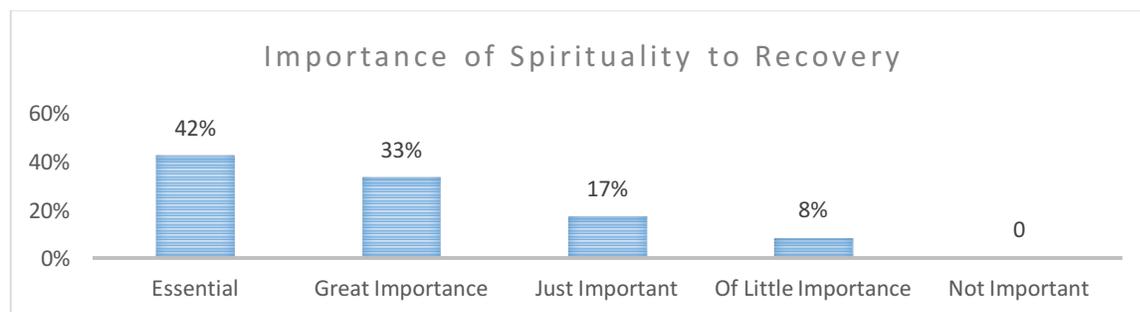
Step involvement; five of the twelve participants had been to formal treatment or 42%.

According to the 2014 A.A. survey 32% of their membership attended formal treatment. My reason for asking about formal treatment was related to my assertion in the paper that in addition to A.A.'s efforts to distinguish spirituality from religion, spiritual care professionals in treatment settings often make this distinction.

The next category of questions pertained to the importance the participants ascribed to spirituality [Table 3.] and to working the Steps [Table 4.] in their recovery:

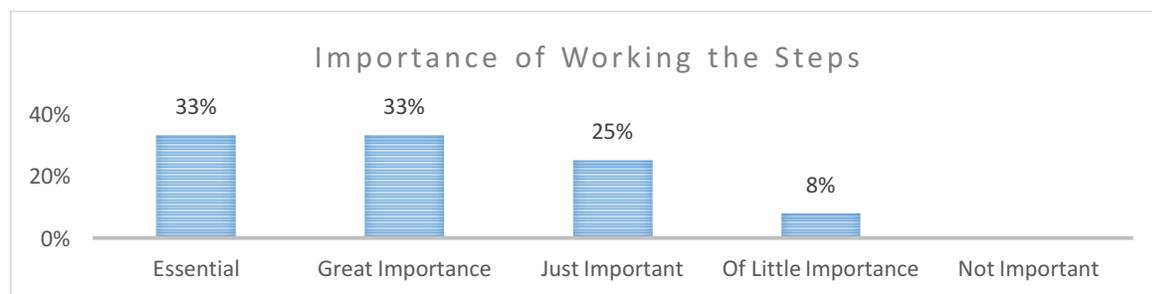
**Table 3.**

*Q. How important is spirituality to your recovery?*



**Table 4.**

*Q. How important is "working the Steps" to your recovery?*



Of the 12 participants, 5 thought spirituality was essential to their recovery and 4 thought it had great importance. None thought it was unimportant. The responses to the next question of the importance of working the Steps were nearly identical though I will point out a few differences.

Seven of the twelve participants placed equal importance on both spirituality and the Steps and of those four considered them “essential,” two considered them of “great importance,” and one “just important.”

This suggests that for 90% of the participants, spirituality and the Steps were at a minimum “important” and of those, nearly 75% thought they were of “great importance or essential.” Of the remaining five, three placed less importance on the Steps than spirituality and two more importance on the Steps. For only one of the participants was there a difference of more than one level which was “great importance” of spirituality to “of little importance” of the Steps.

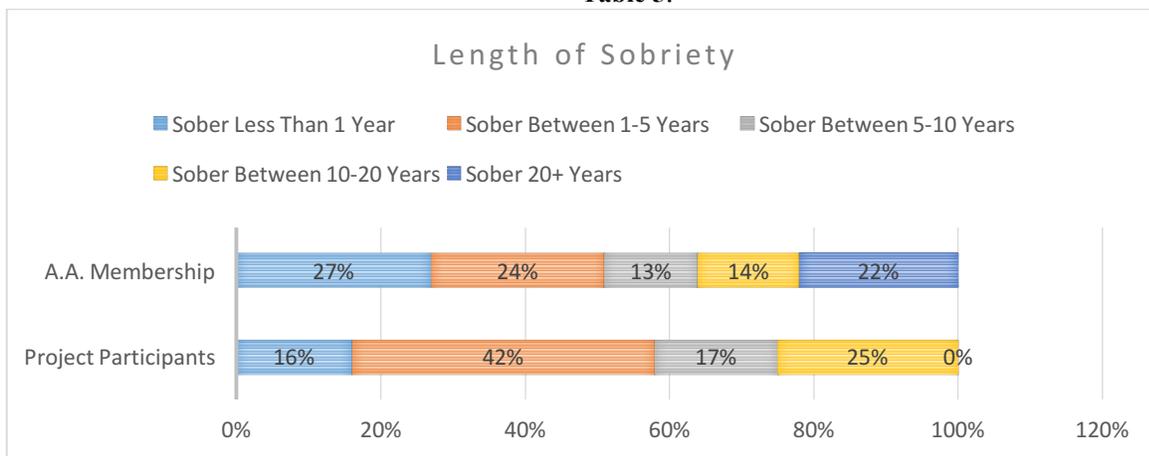
Studies typically demonstrate higher abstinence rates associated with Twelve Step involvement. I say “typically” because there are variations in the scope and specificities of the studies and there are challenges in conducting rigorous trials in Twelve Step effectiveness overall. This said, a brief review of the literature supports a positive correlation between Twelve Step attendance and abstinence rates.<sup>4</sup>

Related to abstinence, I did include a question about length of sobriety and the chart below graphs the results compared with A.A. membership once again:

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<sup>4</sup> John Kelly, F., et al, “Spirituality in Recovery: A Lagged Mediation Analysis of Alcoholics Anonymous’ Principal Theoretical Mechanism of Behavior Change.” *Alcoholism Clinical and Experimental Research* 3 (2011): 454-463.  
Lee Ann Kaskutas, “Alcoholics Anonymous Effectiveness: Faith Meets Science.” *Journal of Addictive Diseases* 2 (2009): 145-157.

**Table 5.**



The average length of sobriety for the participants is 6 years and for the A.A. membership it is almost 10 years. The highest represented length for the project are those with 1–5 years of sobriety and for the A.A. membership it is those sober less than one year.

To round out the participants’ recovery profile on the questionnaire, I asked the participants to choose from a number of practices or activities, known to be of a spiritual nature, among Twelve Step members. They were asked to choose as many as applied. Below are the choices and the number of participants that identified each of them:

**Table 6.**

<b>Attend Twelve Step Meetings</b>	<b>Work the Steps</b>	<b>Pray Serenity Prayer</b>	<b>Prayer: Other Regularly</b>	<b>Meditate</b>	<b>Read Big Book</b>
12 of 12	10 of 12	10 of 12	7 of 12	5 of 12	10 of 12
<b>Make Gratitude List</b>	<b>Take a Daily Inventory</b>	<b>Engage in Fellowship w/ another Alc./Addict</b>	<b>Take a Service Commitment</b>	<b>Make Use of Slogans</b>	<b>Pass it On/Step Twelve</b>
3 of 12	4 of 12	8 of 12	8 of 12	7 of 12	6 of 12

Average number of meetings per week of participants: 1.5

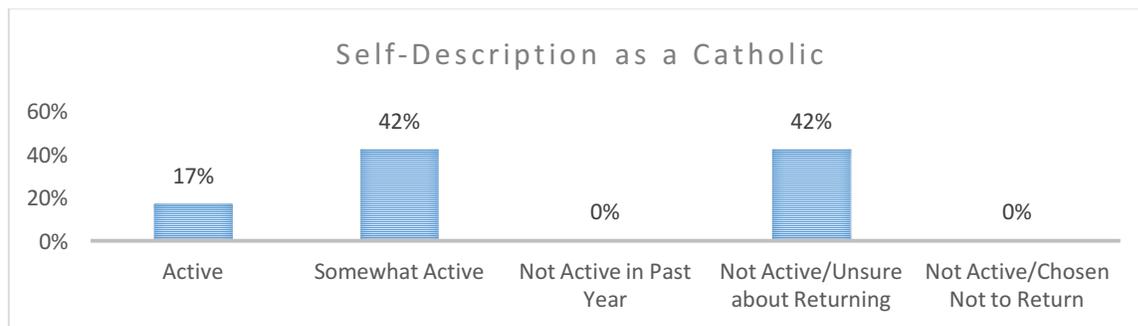
A.A. membership average number of meetings per week: 2.5

I then looked at religion in the lives of the participants. Again, due to the small sample size of my group I reviewed available data from other sources to provide comparison where

possible. I first wanted to know how each participant self-described themselves in terms of their religious faith with the following question:

**Table 7.**

*Q. Which of the following best describes you as a Catholic?*



My choice of response options reflects a few considerations. First, I wanted to encourage honesty as much as possible and thought that using “active” rather than “practicing” would better reflect how a participant perceives themselves in relationship to their faith. Using “practicing” could have possibly led them to measure themselves by what they “do” in terms of practices of their faith. For example, a respondent who uses birth control but goes to Mass every week may not consider herself “practicing,” though might still consider herself “active.” Second, I wanted to know if participants were making any kind of conscious choice about their religious commitment, or were other aspects of their lives and even perhaps their addiction possibly more of a priority. This middle choice - *not active in the past year but intend to return* – was aimed at this question about religious commitment.

Interestingly, there was an even split between those who considered themselves *somewhat active* and those who considered themselves *not active and unsure whether they want to return*. In fact, these two responses represented over 80% of the participants. While I do not intend to overstate the significance of these two responses, I do think it beneficial to note them. In my opinion, these responses suggest a level of ambivalence in this sample of Catholics. The

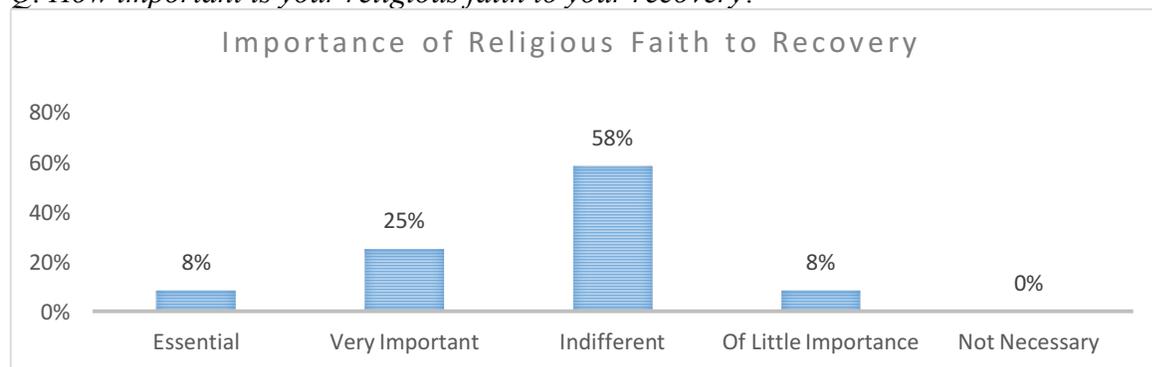
“*somewhat active’s*” may have some ambivalence about the value of making more of an effort to engage with their religious faith. The “*not active and unsure whether they want to return*” selectors may have some ambivalence about whether religion in general, Catholicism or perhaps even the Catholic Church has anything to offer them. These of course are generalizations and assumptions and could be further explored with the individuals themselves or further study.

Perhaps even more important than how to interpret the meaning of this perceived ambivalence is the fact that despite it, these ten participants who identified in one of these two categories voluntarily signed up and participated in a program with a focus on the integration of spirituality and religion. I think this is significant to this project in ministry as at least the idea it puts forth, integrating spirituality and religion, interested at least the 10 Catholics represented in this sample who did not consider themselves “*active.*” Because recruitment was done by announcement and not invitation, it was impossible to know how many Catholics declined the opportunity and for what reason they declined.

The next two questions I asked may provide further insight. I asked about the importance of religion to each participant’s recovery:

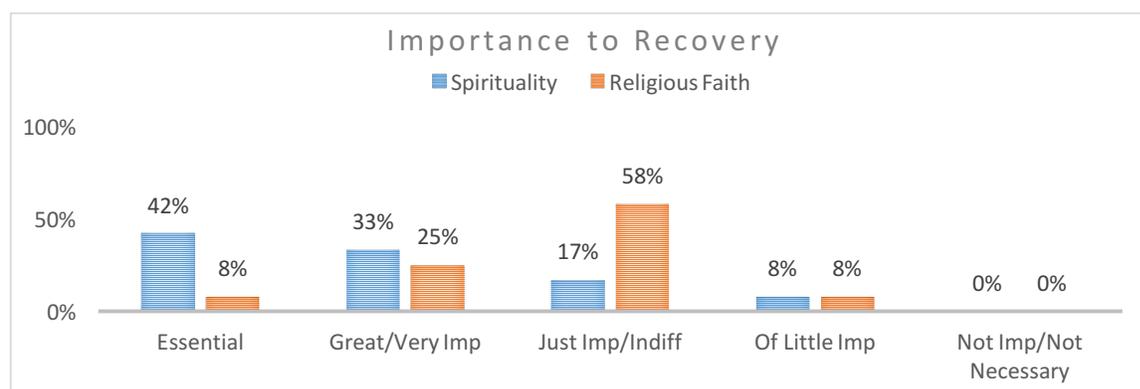
**Table 8.**

*Q. How important is your religious faith to your recovery?*



I compared the responses to this question with the earlier question about the importance of spirituality to each participant's recovery and charted the comparison below. Of note, there are three slight modifications to the choices of response in the two questions: In the religious question I replaced "great importance" with "very important;" "just important" with "indifferent," and, "not important" with "not necessary."

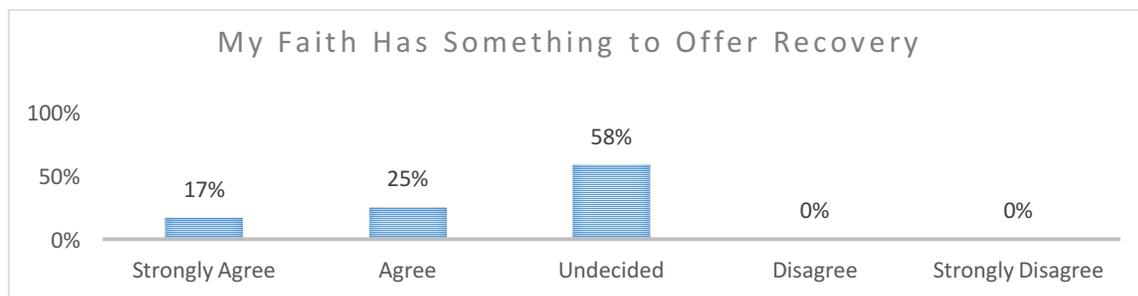
**Table 9.**



In looking at the comparison a few things stood out. Close to half of the participants deem spirituality *essential* to their recovery, the most represented response on the spirituality question. Only one of the twelve deemed their religious faith *essential* to their recovery and *indifferent* was the most represented at 58%. It is not clear whether this prevalence of indifference about religious faith and its importance to recovery is related to my previous suggestion about an overall ambivalence about both religious involvement and religious commitment or if it is related to a lack of knowledge or exposure to the way the two may be integrated. I did ask a second question inquiring about the participant's belief that their faith at least had something to offer their recovery. This question was asked again in the post-program questionnaire and will be compared in the next section.

**Table 10.**

*Q. Consider the following statement and choose one that applies – “My Catholic faith has something to offer my recovery.”*



As Table 10 demonstrates, more than half of the participants who volunteered to attend the program are *undecided* as to whether their Catholic faith has something to offer their recovery. It is the assertion of this project that it indeed does and it has been my hope in pursuing this project in ministry that it can. That participants are at least curious about this is a start. Further on in this chapter is a comparison of participant’s responses to the same question after having attended the program.

To complete this first part of the evaluation process, I arranged to meet with each participant for approximately one hour. All but two interviews took place in my private practice office. The two that did not were conducted by phone. Each interview began with a friendly greeting and brief conversation aimed at putting the participant at ease. I then shared a little about myself and then reiterated the purpose of the project. I also reiterated the participant’s role in the project and what they could expect. I then asked each participant if they were ready to proceed and with an affirmative I reviewed and had them each sign the informed consent form.

I also asked each participant for permission to use the information they provide in order to evaluate the program. I explained that in addition to written evaluations, I intended with their permission to record in writing their comments in the presentations, their weekly reflections and to audiotape this initial interview. I assured each participant of the measures I would take to

protect their anonymity. I was also careful to inform each participant that they could refuse to answer any question on any of the survey material as well as in this individual interview.

Further, I assured them that recording of their answers was not a precondition of participating and that the purpose of the audio recording was only to ensure the accuracy of reporting data for the project evaluation.

I will share a sampling of responses from questions asked in the *Initial One on One Interviews*. A complete catalog of questions and responses can be found in Appendix A.2.

### 1. What is your understanding of spirituality?

P-0101: *"It's like what you believe is important in life..."*

P-0103: *"Has to do with meaning and purpose right?"*

P-0104: *"I guess I still go by what I learned from my counselor in treatment... it's about improving my relationships with people, with my higher power and hopefully myself..."*

P-0105: *"Basically being a better person, appreciating the good things, having gratitude..."*

P-0106: *"The opposite of what I was..." (laughs) No... it's caring about things or people other than myself..."*

P-0201: *"Being in a good place...;" (pauses) "maybe being in a good place with myself..." (pause again) "oh and with God..."*

P-0202: *"Recognizing all the good things or positive things in life. Recognizing what's around me and appreciating it..."*

P-0203: *"A deeper sense of myself and the world I live in...Something other than the physical that makes me – me..."*

P-0204: *"I understand it to mean having a higher purpose in my life... like not sweating the small things and caring about things or I mean people and animals and the planet...in the way God intends for us to be maybe..."*

P-0205: *"Being in a healthy place with myself, being in healthy relationships, having positive thinking, doing positive actions..."*

P-0206: *"Doing the right thing when no one is looking..." (laughs) "I struggle with really understanding it – maybe I will learn from the workshop..." (laughs)*

P-0207: *“I have a hard time defining that one...” “when I hear the word it makes me think of incense and chanting...” (laughs) “so I think I usually just translate it to religion if that makes sense...”*

The participants, though involved in a spiritual program of recovery, struggled somewhat to express succinctly or specifically their understanding of spirituality. It is possible they were trying to provide the “right” answer or the “textbook” answer. It was also the first question I asked and it is possible the participant was somewhat nervous or perhaps my phrasing had something to do with it. The responses do reflect however, some of the distinctions typically made to distinguish spirituality from religion, as I stated in the previous chapter.

2. Do you view your addiction as a spiritual illness in addition to having physical and mental aspects? If so, what way(s) is it a spiritual illness for you?

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P-0101: Answer – Yes. *“In my addiction I just didn’t care about anyone but myself. I felt entitled, absolutely no humility...”*

P-0103: Answer – Yes. *“I think I was passively trying to die by the time I hit my bottom... and it wasn’t because I felt physically or psychologically sick...”*

P-0104: Answer – Yes. *“It used to be when I drank that I didn’t care about anyone but me... Now if it’s about me I’m in trouble...”*

P-0105: Answer – Yes. *“Selfishness, want what I want, not caring who I hurt...”*

P-0106: Answer – Yes. *“I was in the gutter (laughs) Not literally but spiritually...”*

P-0201: Answer – Yes, I think so. *“It was definitely psychological and biological – those for sure...”*

P-0202: Answer – I guess it is. *“Anxiety, drinking made me feel better in a lot of ways though...”*

P-0203: Answer – Yes. *“Gosh I was just discussing this the other day after a meeting... I associate it with, well like think of God as light and addiction is darkness and I was in the darkness...”*

P-0204: Answer – Absolutely. (laughs) *“I was a depraved human being...”*

P-0205: Answer – Yes. *“I was a mess (laughs), my life was a mess... just doing all the wrong things...”*

P-0206: Answer – Yes. *“Everything went out the window in terms of my morals or relationships or... just I... it was just bad...”*

P-0207: Answer – I think so. *“It’s not entirely clear but I know I wasn’t really myself when I drank...”*

Many of the responses self-refer to “selfishness or self-centeredness” which the Big Book associates with spiritual illness and others refer to not living up to personal standards. Listening to their responses, I was aware that the participants were saying more about “who” they were in their addiction and less about “what” they did when they were using. In a study comparing men and women in recovery with subjects who were not chemically dependent it was found that recovering addicts scored significantly higher in proneness to shame and significantly lower on proneness to guilt.<sup>5</sup> This has been my observation professionally as well and is again evident in one of the questions about a relationship with God as I report in the next paragraph.

After the questions about spirituality, I asked a series of questions with regards to religion. I will share a sampling of the responses to two of them and again these and the participant’s responses are cataloged in the Appendix.

### 3. Do you believe God seeks a relationship with you?

P-0101: Answer – Yes. (Somewhat pensive) *“But I don’t usually think of it like that, I think of it the other way around...”*

P-0103: Answer – Yes. *“Somehow that resonates, yes...”*

P-0104: Answer – *“I guess.”* (With a perplexed look).

P-0105: Answer – (Perplexed look) *“Yes... I think... (pauses) yes, of course right...? I’m the one who had the problem”*

P-0106: Answer – Yes. *“But I have the work to do...”*

P-0201: Answer – Yes. *“I don’t have a problem with that...”*

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<sup>5</sup> Lynn E. O’Conner, et “Shame, Guilt, Depression in Men and Women in Recovery from Addiction,” *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 6 (1994): 503-510.

P-0202: Answer – Not Sure.

P-0203: Answer – Yes. (Pauses) *“Intellectually I do...”*

P-0204: Answer – Yes. *“I do... it took me a long time to believe that but yes...”*

P-0205: Answer – Yes. *“Yeah, yeah...I think of it usually the other way around...”*

P-0206: Answer – *“Not there yet...”*

P-0207: Answer – Yes. *“I think so...”*

Only one of the participants expressed an affirmative answer with real certainty. The majority of them had to contemplate the question for a few moments before answering. This brings me back to my central argument about the abstract and largely subjective nature of spirituality. How does a person come to “know” God or a higher power and more specific to this question, how do they come to “know” that God wants or seeks a relationship with them? As Paul tells the Christians in Galatia;

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather be known by God, how can you turn your back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more?<sup>6</sup>

This “knowing God” and “being known by God” that Paul is talking about is the whole thrust of Twelve Step recovery – relationship with God. In a spirituality grounded in religion, the answer to this question becomes much clearer.

The next question aimed again at this issue:

#### 4. How do you discern God’s will in your life?

P-0101: *“Try to listen in prayer...”*

P-0103: *“Third step prayer...”*

P-0104: *“I try to take it back to Step 6...”*

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<sup>6</sup> Gal. 4:8-9 (New American Bible).

P-0105: *“Prayer...doing the next right thing...when I do that I think that is God’s will...”*

P-0106: *“I have been practicing listening in prayer...my sponsor told me to try that...it is hard...”*

P-0201: *“I don’t know if I do...I have to think about that...”*

P-0202: *“I don’t think I really have so much... my sponsor would probably agree... (laughs)”*

P-0203: *“I know I will get there but haven’t really yet. I’m not up to Step Three yet...”*

P-0204: *“I meditate a lot asking for it...”*

P-0205: *“I work with my sponsor a lot on Step 3 and 11...”*

P-0206: *“Not enough (laughs) ...”*

P-0207: *“I guess I don’t actively do it or maybe I did a few times but haven’t really made it something I do like regularly...I need to work on that...”*

Again, the responses reveal an absence of religious grounding in this essential question of discerning God’s will. Nearly half of the participants indicated they do not or do not know how. In the interview when this type of response was given I then asked the participants if they were interested to know how and they all answered in the affirmative. One last note, I made the correlation between length of sobriety and the answer to this question – the longer the participant had in recovery, the clearer they were about how to discern God’s will. These were primarily through Twelve Step resources however and not religious resources. Participants 01-03, 02-04 and 02-05 each have 10+ years of sobriety and were clear about this question. Participants 01-01, 01-04, 01-05, 01-06, 02-06 and 02-07 were somewhat clear about this question and these all had 3+ years of sobriety. Participants 02-01 and 02-03 had less than a year and were the most unsure.

Overall, the participant data and interviews suggest this sample of Catholics in recovery represent demographics sufficient to consider them adequate subjects for the purposes of this project. Having worked in the field for over fifteen years, I did not find that this sample varied widely from other Catholics in recovery. Further, based on my experience, this sample represents well the concerns that motivated this project in the first place.

### *Post Program Results*

In order to evaluate the program's effectiveness, it was necessary to find a way to determine whether attending the program resulted in a change in participants' understanding and practice of integrating their recovery spirituality with their Catholic faith. I reviewed the literature and samples of various scales that attempt to measure growth in the contexts of religion and spirituality. I determined these would not be helpful in assessing what, if anything had been learned as a result of participation. Since I developed the program as catechetical, I would need some way to evaluate change in the participants' understanding or knowledge of certain religious doctrine. I would also need some way of evaluating the likelihood of a participant integrating, in thought or practice, this knowledge or understanding with their recovery.

An important consideration in devising the questionnaire was the difficulty of asking questions about a participant's knowledge of certain aspects of their faith that they may not easily recall if they have been out of the Church or not been active in some time. I determined that to measure change, the participant would do a self-assessment of their knowledge on the topics and the likelihood of integrating these going forward. To accomplish this, I devised a two-part questionnaire asking each participant to rate themselves both *before the program* and *after the program*. The first part asked them to rate from 1 – 5 their level of knowledge of 10 topics covered in the program. The second part asked them to rate from 1 – 5 the likelihood of

their making certain conscious connections to aspects of their faith and to engage in identified practices. The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.3. The following is an example of the format of the questionnaire:

### **Part 1.**

**Self-Assessment of Learning:** Think about what you already knew and what you learned from the program, “*A Catechetical Program for Roman Catholics in Twelve Step Recovery Programs.*” Then evaluate your knowledge in each of the following topic areas **Before and After** the program.

**1 = No Knowledge**

**3 = Some Knowledge**

**5 = A Lot of Knowledge**

Before Program

Self-Assessment of Your Knowledge  
Related to the Topic of:

After Program

1	2	3	4	5	<u>Topic Covered in Program</u> Twelve Step Spirituality	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

### **Part 2.**

Think about what you already do and then think about what you learned from the program, “*A Catechetical Program for Roman Catholics in Twelve Step Recovery Programs.*” Then evaluate the likelihood of the following **Before and After** the program.

**1 = Not Likely**

**3 = Somewhat Likely**

**5 = Very Likely**

Before Program

Self-Assessment of the following:

After Program

1	2	3	4	5	Topics related to likelihood of seeking to integrate Catholic faith with spirituality.	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	--	---	---	---	---	---

The questionnaire provided useful information as to whether each participant experienced some difference directly attributable to having attended the program. In order to quantify the participants’ self-assessment of change, I sorted the responses according to the topic and recorded each participant’s scores and calculated the difference between the “before” and “after” distributions. The following is a table demonstrating the total scores and the mean difference in knowledge and likelihood of change in practice. Outcomes for each participant are logged in the appendix.

Table 11.

<b>Post-Program Questionnaire Results</b>			
<b>Part 1. Knowledge of Topic:</b>	<b>(n=12) Before Mean <math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>(n=12) After Mean <math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>(n=12) Mean Difference <math>\bar{x}</math></b>
1. Twelve Step Spirituality.	3	4.3	+ 1.1
2. The Holy Trinity as “Power Greater Than Ourselves” as in Steps One and Two.	3	4.2	+1.7
3. The Distinctiveness of a Spirituality Rooted in Catholic Faith and Practice.	2.4	4.1	+2.6
4. The Relevance of What Happens at Mass to Twelve Step Spirituality.	2.0	4.2	+2.6
5. Scripture and its Relevance to Our Relationship with God.	2.0	4.0	+1.6
6. The Eucharist and its Relevance to Spirituality.	2.0	3.9	+2.3
7. The Eucharist and its Relevance to Transforming Our Lives.	2.0	3.8	+2.0
8. The Sacrament of Reconciliation as a concrete expression of restoring relationship with God.	3.0	4.4	+1.5
9. Catholic Formulaic Prayers as Informing and Inspiring our Communication with God.	3.0	4.5	+1.8
10. Prayer as Encounter with God.	3.0	4.7	+1.9
<b>Part 2. Likelihood of change in behavior:</b>	<b>(n=12) Before Mean <math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>(n=12) After Mean <math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>(n=12) Mean Difference <math>\bar{x}</math></b>
11. Likelihood of seeking to integrate your Catholic faith with spirituality.	3.0	4.4	+1.8
12. Likelihood of making conscious connections between your Step work and what happens at Mass.	2.0	4.3	+2.5
13. Likelihood of making conscious connections between your Step work and the Sacraments.	2.0	4.1	+2.3
14. Likelihood of engaging in <i>Lectio Divina</i> to deepen your relationship with God.	2.0	3.1	+1.4
15. Likelihood of engaging in <i>Gospel Contemplation</i> to deepen your relationship with God.	2.0	3.3	+1.5
16. Likelihood of engaging in <i>Scripture Meditation</i> to deepen your relationship with God.	2.0	3.4	+1.6
17. Likelihood of including specifically Catholic prayers in your daily prayer activity.	3.0	4.6	+1.6

18. Likelihood of looking to specifically religious resources for spiritual sustenance or nourishment.	3.0	4.2	+1.7
19. Likelihood of looking to specifically religious resources for spiritual guidance.	3.0	4.2	+1.5

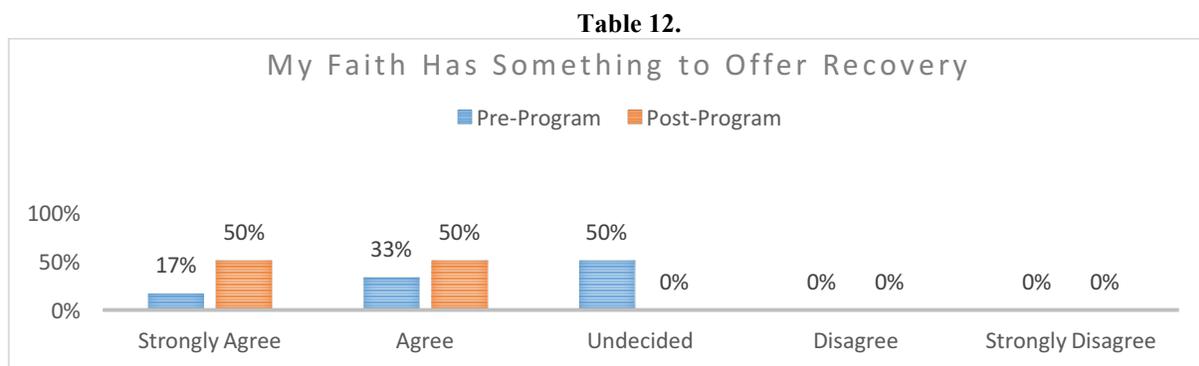
The results support a conclusion that the program did effect some quantifiable change in both knowledge and in the likelihood of integrating Catholic faith with Twelve Step spirituality for all participants. There are several details in the results that suggest this is the case:

1. In reviewing the mean differences, every question scored a positive change of at least ( $\bar{x} = 1.1$ ) or above. This representing the lowest score ( $\bar{x} = 1.1$ ), was on the topic of Twelve Step spirituality, meaning there was some change after the program on this topic but it was not as large as it was for the other topics related to religious faith and practice.
2. The two highest representations of change were shared in Part 1 by topics #3 and #4; “the distinctiveness of a spirituality rooted in Catholic faith and practice,” and “the relevance of what happens at Mass to Twelve Step spirituality.” These both scored ( $n=12$ ;  $\bar{x} = 2.6$ ). Each of these topics also had a mode of ( $mo = 1.0$ ) on the *before* scale which is “no knowledge” and a mode of ( $mo. = 4.0$ ) on the *after* scale which splits “some knowledge [3.0]” and “a lot of knowledge [5.0].”
3. In Part II, the highest representations of change appeared in #12 and #13; the two questions asking about the likelihood of making some conscious connection between Step work and what happens at Mass and Step work and the Sacraments. The mean difference from the likelihood of a participants making that conscious connection before the program to after was ( $\bar{x} = 2.5$ ) and ( $\bar{x} = 2.3$ ) respectively.
4. There were three areas in the domain of knowledge that shared the lowest mean score in the “before” distribution. These were #4, #5, #6 and #7. These four have to do with the

liturgy, Scripture and the Eucharist and their relevance to spirituality. All but the question about Scripture scored the highest mean difference. What this indicates is that at least for this sample group, there exists a lack of knowledge about the spirituality of three fundamentals of faith life – the Liturgy, Scripture and the Eucharist.

- There were five areas in the domain of practice (likelihood to...) that shared the lowest mean score in the “before” distribution. These were #12, #13, #14, #15, and #16. Again these all pertained to Liturgy, Scripture and the Sacraments.

The last question on the post-program questionnaire asked again the question, “*Consider the following statement and choose one that applies – “My Catholic faith has something to offer my recovery.”*” I compared the post-program responses with the pre-program responses in the following results:



As the table demonstrates, the six participants that were “undecided” prior to attending the program came to either “agree” or “strongly agree” after attending, that their faith had something to offer their recovery. Additionally, four of those who previously “agreed” came to “strongly agree” at the completion and the remaining two remained the same in that they “strongly agreed” before and after attending. This suggests that attending the program positively influenced the perceptions of the participants.

### *The Program Evaluation*

The last piece of evaluative material was the *Program Evaluation* (Appendix A.4) providing feedback on the presentation and facilitator. Unlike the other questionnaires, this was completed anonymously to support honest feedback. This final evaluation consisted of six statements rated on a Likert scale of agreement; one question with a multiple choice answer; and, one question asking for a rating from “poor” to “excellent” the quality of the program overall, the space, and the handouts. It concludes with three open-ended questions giving the participant the opportunity to comment on what was best about the program, areas for improvement and any additional comments of their own. The results were overwhelmingly positive.

In response to the following six statements, the participants chose one of five options:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q. 1) The program was well organized.

“Strongly agreed” represented 100% of the responses.

Q. 2) The material was presented in an organized manner.

“Strongly agreed” represented 92% of the responses and 8% “agreed.”

Q. 3) The material covered was relevant to my recovery.

“Strongly agreed” represented 58% of the responses and 42% “agreed.”

Q. 4) The exercises were relevant to the material.

“Strongly agreed” represented 92% of the responses and 8% “agreed.”

Q. 5) The presenter was knowledgeable about the topic.

“Strongly agreed” represented 100% of the responses.

Q. 6) I expect to use the knowledge and insights gained from this program in my recovery.

“Strongly agreed” represented 67% of the responses and 33% “agreed.”

In developing the sessions, I found that there was an abundance of material that could contribute to the topics of this project. I chose key aspects of each topic in order to keep the presentation within the time frame I advertised for. I asked the following question as I wanted feedback from the participants on the length of the program.

Q. 7) Given the topic, was the program:

<u>Too Short</u>	<u>Just Right</u>	<u>Too Long</u>
50%	50%	0%

The participants were split between “too short” and “just right” and none thought it was too long. It was my experience after presenting each session that more could be said about the topics and that more time would allow for more spiritual and pastoral guidance on specific questions from the participants. I have included some of the questions and comments in the Appendix. The majority of them lent themselves to valuable opportunities for further exploration.

The participants then rated the following with high marks:

Q. 8) Please rate the following:

a. Program Overall:	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>
	0	0	0	1	11
b. Meeting Space:	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>
	0	0	2	5	5
c. Visuals:	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>
	0	0	0	8	4
d. Handouts:	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>
	0	0	1	7	4

The final three questions were open-ended and contained a range of responses all of which were positive. I have cataloged the responses in the Appendix but will point out a few themes that emerged for each question:

Q. 9) What did you most appreciate/enjoy/think was best about the program?

A few participants remarked that they appreciated the session on the liturgy in particular including that it held more meaning now to their recovery. Another few remarked that they were inspired to learn more and at least one remarked that it “was refreshing to talk about ‘God’ and recovery.” The following represent a sample of the participant comments; a full recording is represented in the Appendix:

*“The session on the liturgy/Mass. It has more meaning now.”*

*“I wasn’t all that sure religion had anything to offer. I believe it does now and that means a lot.”*

*“It was so refreshing to talk about God in a meaningful discussion. I knew a lot of this but had forgotten so much. I appreciated being reminded of everything I loved about my faith/my church.”*

Q. 10) What could have been improved about the program?

Seven of the twelve participants suggested that the program should continue, including that it be made longer and that it be on-going. One participant suggested that it be offered by parishes and some suggested nothing could be improved.

*“Nothing!, I think should be offered by parishes. I would attend!”*

*“Should be on-going meeting.”*

*“Maybe it could go on for longer than 6 weeks. There is so much to learn. This was good start but would have liked there to be more meetings to spend more time to understand it to make it a part of my recovery.”*

Q. 11) Any additional comments?

Several participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate, many made complimentary remarks about myself, one expressed that it was meaningful to their recovery and one suggested it be offered in parishes where A.A. meetings are held.

*“I really liked Kathlyn [sic] – she made this a special program. Amazing presence.”*

*“Thank you Kathleen. Great spirit.”*

*“Glad I did this.”*

### *Limitations of Methods*

There were a few limitations in the methods used in the evaluation to point out. First, the quantitative analysis was limited to the data collected only from the participants and was therefore without a group of subjects with which to compare. Second, I chose not to give a pre-program questionnaire to compare responses to a post-program questionnaire to determine change. I chose rather to have the participants assess themselves at the conclusion. This limited the evaluation of how the participants might have assessed themselves prior to being exposed to material in the sessions.

Finally, as previously mentioned, there were only two criteria for recruiting participants; that they be Roman Catholic and that they are in Twelve Step recovery. There are many variations within these two groups such as whether the individual is practicing or not and whether a person is or has worked the Steps. These variations within the group limit the evaluation to make only general assumptions of applicability to all Catholics in recovery.

### *Conclusion*

Overall, the evaluative process supported my initial assertion that Catholics in recovery need guidance in how to make pertinent connections between Twelve Step spirituality and their faith. It also supported my assertion that a program like this could renew interest in those who

lack meaningful connection to the Church during this time of significant change in their lives. One of the many meaningful moments for me as presenter came when a participant made the remark, “This is reminding me of what I loved about CCD when I was a kid...” I think the program offered the opportunity for several of them to “recall” what is in their hearts and to be reminded of the central message of their faith which is that no matter their past, no matter their addiction, God loves them and wants to restore them to a relationship with him.

This is often a challenging message to drive home to addicts who have many “walls” to penetrate before they begin to trust that they are worthy of God’s love and mercy. It is also a challenge to find ways to carry this message to those who have been away from the Church and who have some ambivalence about the value or place it has in their lives including their recovery. Considering these two challenges in particular, I think the project has something to add to discussions about pastoral care and counseling to recovering persons and something to add to discussions about how the Church focuses its outreach to recovering persons. As I pointed out in the first part of the paper, the Church is not unaware nor neglectful of addiction among its flock, but perhaps more could be done to speak to those who are already in recovery.

Twelve Step programs serve a vital role in restoring our relationship with God, others and ourselves. The tangible realities of our belief system clearly correspond with the spiritual principles of A.A. and other Twelve Steps groups. The participants’ response to the program demonstrated to me that the texture of spiritual matters is not arbitrary – the name, the form, have significance. Their attention and enthusiasm during the sessions was suggestive of their “thirst” for something more. Their commitment to attendance was suggestive of how much they value their faith and of their curiosity of whether there was a place for it in their recovery. Finally, the evaluation and my experience with the participants, suggests to me that the Catholic

Church ought to offer its own version of Twelve Step recovery groups that have Catholicism integrated within them.

### *Future Considerations*

In reviewing the project for this conclusion it is clear to me that there are opportunities for local parishes and greater Catholic communities such as archdioceses to minister to Catholics in recovery. Because I work in the field, I was able to gain access to both the insight for the need for resources to integrate tenets of our Catholic faith with Twelve Step spirituality and the individuals who are seeking it. This will be more challenging from outside the field however. Those who are active or somewhat active in their local parish will benefit from a program like this being offered as adult catechesis. Those who are undecided or ambivalent about their relationship to the Church will be much more difficult to access. However, if this sample of participants is any indication of a broader curiosity among them, then it would be worth pursuing.

With regards to the program, I would suggest refining the content and narrowing the overall scope. There is an abundance of material relevant to deepening one's spirituality and/or relationship with God and I am aware in hindsight that I attempted to accomplish perhaps too much. For instance, one series of adult catechetical workshops or lectures could focus solely on just one of the topics such as the liturgy and Twelve Step spirituality. Another might explore the healing and strengthening significance of the Eucharist to spirituality. Building a group that engages in *Lectio Divina* or Gospel contemplation with a focus on one of the Twelve Steps at a time could encourage a recovering person to bringing the Scriptures into their spiritual practices. Overall, my suggestion for future programs would be to take more time, offer an on-going series focusing on one topic at a time and engage the recovery community in promoting it.

To conclude, I will end where I began; as Catholics, spirituality is not one dimension of our life, it is our life. It is Christian life in its fullness, its fullness that can only be achieved by conforming to the person of Christ, in communion with God and others through the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. The interaction of our human spirit with the Spirit of God is revealed and expressed in more than the subjective. Because of the Incarnation, our spirituality is revealed in distinctly objective forms, revealed in *real* presence through the Liturgy, Sacraments and prayer. These are formative and transformative and without them, spirituality risks staying at the notional level.

**Appendix A**  
**Assessment Instruments**

**A.1 Participant Data Form**

Dear Participant:

In order to complete the evaluation section of this project in ministry, it is helpful to gather particular background information about you. In order to protect your privacy, your name is not included on this form and as with other material you have been assigned a numeric identifier in order for me to record your responses. The information you provide here will be used for the sole purpose of evaluating the program you are participating in for my project in Ministry in satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry. Please complete this form to the best of your ability.

Participant ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

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**1. Gender: Male** \_\_\_ **Female** \_\_\_

**2. Age Range:** (Choose One)

(18 – 27) \_\_\_\_\_ (28 – 37) \_\_\_\_\_ (38 – 47) \_\_\_\_\_ (48 – 57) \_\_\_\_\_ (58 – 67) \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Highest Level of Education:** (Choose One)

High School \_\_\_ Some College \_\_\_\_\_ College Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Post Graduate Study/Degree \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Length of Sobriety:** (Choose one)

Less Than (1) Year \_\_\_\_\_ Between (1-5) Years \_\_\_\_\_ Between (5-10) Years \_\_\_\_\_ Between (10-20) Years \_\_\_\_\_

Sober 20+ Years \_\_\_\_\_

**5. On average, how many Twelve Step meetings do you attend per week?** \_\_\_\_\_

**6. How important is spirituality to your recovery?** (Circle one)

Essential      Great Importance      Just Important      Of Little Importance      Not Important

**7. How important is “working the Steps” to your recovery?** (Circle one)

Essential      Great Importance      Just Important      Of Little Importance      Not Important

**8. The following represent common spiritual practices or activities. Place a check (✓) by all that apply to you.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Step Work                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Twelve Step Meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serenity Prayer                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Make Gratitude List  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer other than serenity prayer | <input type="checkbox"/> Make use of Slogans  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meditation                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Daily Inventory      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read AA Literature                | <input type="checkbox"/> Fellowship           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meditate on Daily                 | <input type="checkbox"/> "Pass it On"         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read from Big Book                | <input type="checkbox"/> Acts of Service      |

**9. How important is your religious faith to your recovery? (Circle one)**

Essential      Very Important      Indifferent      Of little Importance      Not Necessary

**10. Which of the following best describes you as a Catholic? (Choose One).**

- Active
- Somewhat active
- Not active in past year but intend to return
- Not active and unsure about returning
- Not active and have chosen not to return to Catholic Church

**11. Consider the following statement and choose one that applies – “My Catholic faith has something to offer my recovery.”**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**12. Have you utilized any of the following resources to develop a connection between your religious faith and spirituality while in recovery? (Check all that apply)**

- Catholic spiritual retreat
- Catholic spiritual direction
- Parish based workshop/lecture/program
- Sought guidance from a spiritual or pastoral care professional
- Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius
- Regularly pray the Liturgy of the Hours
- Multimedia resources such as books, audiobooks, podcasts, video's, websites, on-line forums, daily readings
- Other; please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**A.1a. Participant Responses**

Q. 1. Gender

Male	Female
7	5

Q. 2. Age Range

18 - 27	28 - 37	38 - 47	48 - 57	58 - 67
0	5	6	1	0

Q. 3. Education Level

High School	Some College	College Degree	Post Grad/Grad
1	2	6	3

Q. 4. Length of Sobriety

Q. 5. Average Number of Meetings Weekly

Participant	< 1 year	1-5 years	5-10 years	10-20 years	20+ years	Average # Meetings
P0101		√				1
P0103				√		1
P0104			√			2
P0105		√				1
P0106		√				2
P0201	√					1
P0202		√				2
P0203				√		2
P0204				√		1
P0205		√				2
P0206		√				2
P0207		√				1
<b>Total</b>	1	7	1	3	0	1.5

Q. 6. How Important is Spirituality to your Recovery?

Essential      Great Importance      Just Important      Of Little Importance      Not Important

Q. 7. How important is “working the Steps” to your recovery?

Essential      Great Importance      Just Important      Of Little Importance      Not Important

Q. 9. How important is your religious faith to your recovery?

Essential      Very Important      Indifferent      Of little Importance      Not Necessary

10. Which of the following best describes you as a Catholic?

Active / Somewhat Active / Not Active in Past Year / Not Active and Unsure / Not Active and Not Returning

Participant	Q. 6 Importance of Spirituality to Recovery	Q. 7 Importance of Working Steps To Recovery	Q. 9 Importance of Religious Faith to Recovery	Q. 10 Faith Involvement
P0101	Great Importance	Great Importance	Indifferent	Somewhat Active
P0103	Essential	Essential	Indifferent	Not Active/Unsure
P0104	Essential	Essential	Indifferent	Not Active/Unsure
P0105	Essential	Essential	Very Important	Somewhat Active
P0106	Essential	Essential	Essential	Active
P0201	Great Importance	Of Little Imp.	Very Important	Active
P0202	Of Little Imp.	Just Important	Of Little Imp.	Not Active/Unsure
P0203	Great Importance	Just Important	Very Important	Somewhat Active
P0204	Essential	Great Importance	Indifferent	Not Active/Unsure
P0205	Great Importance	Great Importance	Indifferent	Not Active/Unsure
P0206	Just Important	Great Importance	Indifferent	Somewhat Active
P0207	Just Important	Just Important	Indifferent	Somewhat Active

Q. 11 [Pre-Program] Consider the following statement and choose one that applies – “*My Catholic faith has something to offer my recovery.*”

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

Q. 20 [Post – Program] Same Question.

Participant	Q. 11 Pre-Program	Q. 20 Post-Program	Difference
P0101	Undecided	Strongly Agree	2
P0103	Undecided	Agree	1

P0104	Undecided	Agree	1
P0105	Agree	Strongly Agree	1
P0106	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	0
P0201	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	0
P0202	Undecided	Agree	1
P0203	Agree	Strongly Agree	1
P0204	Undecided	Agree	1
P0205	Undecided	Agree	1
P0206	Undecided	Agree	1
P0207	Agree	Strongly Agree	1

## **A.2 Initial One-On-One Interview Questions**

### Twelve Step Spirituality

1. What is your understanding of spirituality?
2. Can you tell me a little about your spirituality?
3. How do you practice your spirituality?
4. Do you view your alcoholism or addiction as a spiritual illness in addition to it having physical and mental aspects?

If so, in what way (s) is it a spiritual illness for you?

5. Do you believe there is a spiritual solution to the problem of addiction for you personally?

If so, did anything in particular lead you to that belief?

### Religion

6. Were you raised Catholic?
7. Have you had any religious instruction/education?
8. Do you believe God seeks a relationship with you?
9. What are some images that come to mind when you think about God?
10. Do you think it is important to know God's will?
11. How do you discern God's will in your life?
12. Have you had questions about recovery spirituality in light of your Catholic faith?

If yes, what were some of those?

If no, why do you think that is?

## A.2a. Participant Responses

### Initial One-On-One Interview

Q. 1. What is your understanding of spirituality?

Participant	Response
<b>P0101</b>	I think of it as pertaining to what you believe is important in life.
<b>P0103</b>	Has to do with meaning and purpose right.
<b>P0104</b>	Well what you taught us at Hazelden – Improving relationships with HP, others and myself.
<b>P0105</b>	Basically, being a better person, appreciating the good things, having gratitude...
<b>P0106</b>	The opposite of what I was...(laughs). No, it's caring about things or people other than myself.
<b>P0201</b>	Being in a good place, (pauses) maybe a good place with myself...(pause) oh.. and God. (Being in a good place with God I mean).
<b>P0202</b>	Recognizing all the good things or positive things in life. Recognizing what's around me and appreciating it
<b>P0203</b>	A deeper sense of myself and the world I live in. Something other than the physical that makes me or allows me – me...
<b>P0204</b>	I understand it to mean having a higher purpose in my life... like not sweating the small things and caring about things or I mean people and animals and the planet...in the way God intends for us to be maybe
<b>P0205</b>	Being in a healthy place with myself, other, having positive thoughts, doing positive things. I struggle with really understanding it – maybe I will learn from the workshop...
<b>P0206</b>	Doing the right thing when no one is looking...(laughs)
<b>P0207</b>	I have a hard time defining that one..." "when I hear the word it makes me think of incense and chanting..." (laughs) "so I think I usually just translate it to religion if that makes sense..."

Q.2 Can you tell me a little about your spirituality?

Participant	Response
<b>P0101</b>	I never thought about it (spirituality) until recovery. As a doctor, I'm scientific minded, my attitude was "show me..." Spirituality was never on my radar. Now... or beginning with recovery, spirituality is something I am learning, and surprisingly it is one of the most important things to me... it has honestly been the differentiating factor from my two previous attempts at recovery.

<b>P0103</b>	It is an amalgamation of 20 years of wisdom from the rooms of A.A. I am in probably the most intimate relationship of my life with my higher power. I know, know, that I am loved by my higher power in a way I have never known love. Now being a Catholic and all my Catholic upbringing didn't teach..., wait or maybe more accurate to say, I just never felt this kind of love before. I haven't completely abandoned religion, but... I haven't returned to it in a very long time and I think because I have had this fear that it will "muck up" (laughs) to use a crass term, it will ruin this deep intimate relationship I have developed through spirituality in the program.
<b>P0104</b>	You know I have been working many years on this...(laughs). It didn't start so great.. (laughs) but over the years I surrendered and when I did, life just got easier. So... I am still working on it or I should say it is a work in progress.
<b>P0105</b>	I am always working on thinking like a better person. I can't really describe it other than it is something that is making me a better person.
<b>P0106</b>	Yeah... my spirituality is very tied up with my religious beliefs. But... I guess it goes beyond that, I have always been religious but recovery has given a whole new meaning to the way I think about everything – I would say it has made me more authentically religious.
<b>P0201</b>	It comes and goes... my sponsor tells me to "let it happen," rather than try to define it. I haven't really worked beyond Step one and two so I believe maybe if you ask me a year from now maybe (laughs) I will know more clearly.
<b>P0202</b>	Ha! That is in progress!
<b>P0203</b>	I would say it is prayerful...
<b>P0204</b>	I feel very spiritual – it is very internal for me.
<b>P0205</b>	It is heavy in 12 Steps... the 12 steps are like a framework for my spirituality.
<b>P0206</b>	I have to work hard at it; it doesn't come naturally.. I'm a facts guy. I'm all in with it because it keeps me sober but it is something I have to work at.
<b>P0207</b>	I try to say the serenity prayer often, I practice the principles.

Q. 3 How do you practice your spirituality?

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>P0101</b>	Work the steps, pray the serenity prayer, turn it over...
<b>P0103</b>	Daily prayer; steps; I sponsor others; have been working on adding meditation. Though I am resistant to "catholicize" my spirituality – I have been drawn to "Paul" (Apostle) lately. I am working on interrupting self-judgment and I have found it helpful.
<b>P0104</b>	Prayer, steps...
<b>P0105</b>	Prayer, mediation, steps, - sponsoring other addicts.
<b>P0106</b>	Prayer, turning it over, going to Mass.
<b>P0201</b>	I go to Church...if that is considered a practice...
<b>P0202</b>	Talk to my sponsor – she has me going back through the steps.
<b>P0203</b>	Pray, meditate, meetings, fellowship, service commitment at Rikers, I chair meetings there.

<b>P0204</b>	I try to make most things I do spiritual practice... whether I am walking and noticing things around me or talking to someone who seems to need it.. like that.
<b>P0205</b>	Step work, serenity prayer, read the big book, talk to other alcoholics.
<b>P0206</b>	I'm working on Step four right now, make calls, read the big book.
<b>P0207</b>	Meetings when I go.

Q. 4. Do you view your alcoholism or addiction as a spiritual illness in addition to it having physical and mental aspects? If so, in what way(s) is it a spiritual illness for you?

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>P0101</b>	Yes. In my addiction I just didn't care about anyone but myself. I felt entitled, absolutely no humility...
<b>P0103</b>	Yes. I think I was passively trying to die by the time I hit my bottom... and it wasn't because I felt physically or psychologically sick...
<b>P0104</b>	Yes. It used to be when I drank that I didn't care about anyone but me... Now if it's about me I'm in trouble...
<b>P0105</b>	Yes. Selfishness, want what I want, not caring who I hurt...
<b>P0106</b>	Yes. I was in the gutter (laughs) Not literally but spiritually...
<b>P0201</b>	Yes, I think so. It was definitely psychological and biological – those for sure...
<b>P0202</b>	I guess it is. Anxiety, drinking made me feel better in a lot of ways though...
<b>P0203</b>	Yes. Gosh I was just discussing this the other day after a meeting... I associate it with, well like think of God as light and addiction is darkness and I was in the darkness...
<b>P0204</b>	Absolutely. (laughs) I was a depraved human being...
<b>P0205</b>	Yes. I was a mess (laughs), my life was a mess... just doing all the wrong things...
<b>P0206</b>	Yes. Everything went out the window in terms of my morals or relationships or... just I... it was just bad...
<b>P0207</b>	I think so. It's not entirely clear but I know I wasn't really myself when I drank...

5. Do you believe there is a spiritual solution to the problem of addiction for you personally? If so, did anything in particular lead you to that belief?

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>P0101</b>	Yes. Yeah – when I “had” to surrender because I was about to lose my wife; family. I realized I wasn't really enjoying (stops himself) – I didn't like who I was. Now I am learning to and I have no compulsion whatsoever to use.
<b>P0103</b>	Yes. Not dying! (laughs). Seriously though, I was ready to die, trying to die and something wouldn't let me do it. I am certain that was my higher power. It was a powerful experience.
<b>P0104</b>	Yes. When I had 2-3 weeks clean and felt quite physically better – I knew I had to do much more than just quitting drinking. It began to sink in that I needed to change pretty much my whole life.

<b>P0105</b>	Yes. It took a while... maybe around a year, maybe 9-10 months, I started to feel better about myself. I think I realized it then what it meant.
<b>P0106</b>	Absolutely. I am five years sober, my whole outlook has changed – it must be true.
<b>P0201</b>	Can I say “I Guess?” (laughs). Still working that out.
<b>P0202</b>	Yes. Nothing in particular. It has worked out for lots of people right?
<b>P0203</b>	Yes. (laughs) The light and dark is very obvious to me. You know...? My life was very dark... I still have a hard time believing where my life careened out of control.
<b>P0204</b>	Yes. Many years in recovery taught me that.
<b>P0205</b>	Yes. Ha, (laughs) nothing particular but you know how you know when something is true when you hear...?
<b>P0206</b>	Yes. Can I come back to this one? I need to think about that.
<b>P0207</b>	I think so. Not sure...

Q. 6. Were you raised Catholic?

Q. 7. Have you had any religious instruction/education?

	<b>Q. 6</b>	<b>Q.7 Religious Instruction/Educ.</b>
<b>Participant</b>	<b>Raised Catholic?</b>	
<b>P0101</b>	Yes	CCD; Confirmation; Catholic School to 6 <sup>th</sup> grade
<b>P0103</b>	Yes	Catholic School through 12 <sup>th</sup> grade
<b>P0104</b>	Yes	Catechism
<b>P0105</b>	Yes – kind of. My parents were rather lapsed but my God parents influenced me.	CCD
<b>P0106</b>	Yes, but I am more religious now than when I grew up.	Early Instruction. I have attended Adult religious ed. programs
<b>P0201</b>	Yes.	Catholic School
<b>P0202</b>	Yes, my mother very, very devout.	Just CCD
<b>P0203</b>	Yes.	I was involved in youth ministry when teens.
<b>P0204</b>	Yes, I grew up in Poland and your religion is not separate like here.	School was Catholic

<b>P0205</b>	Yes, but my parents were in AA so that overshadowed	First holy communion
<b>P0206</b>	Yes	Catholic school until 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade
<b>P0207</b>	Yes	12 Years Catholic school

Q. 8. Do you believe God seeks a relationship with you?

Q. 9. What are some images that come to mind when you think about God?

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Q. 8 Do you believe God seeks a relationship with you?</b>	<b>Q. 9 Images of God that come to mind?</b>
<b>P0101</b>	Yes. But I don't usually think of it like that, I think of it the other way around..."	I'm having a hard time finding one. I don't know...
<b>P0103</b>	Yes – somehow that resonates, yes.	I try to stay away from the “long white beard white robe image. Don't know, the word that comes to mind is “light.”
<b>P0104</b>	I guess. (With a perplexed look)	Father like images
<b>P0105</b>	(Perplexed look) Yes... I think... (pauses) yes, of course right...? I'm the one who had the problem.	Here my parents influence comes in, (laughs) I want to say something like energy but that isn't right – I guess images from the bible like intense forces.
<b>P0106</b>	Yes. But I have the work to do...	Holy images, fatherly images. Icon images.
<b>P0201</b>	Yes. I don't have a problem with that...	A loving father... (starts to tear up) I recently lost my father... but have always pictured a loving father.
<b>P0202</b>	Not sure.	(laughs) the scary crucifix... Not that it is bad, that just comes to mind.
<b>P0203</b>	Yes. (Pauses) Intellectually I do...	Is there an image for love (laughs)...that is what comes to mind...
<b>P0204</b>	Yes. I do... it took me a long time to believe that but yes...	Mostly pleasant images, images of nature, majestic scenery...(laughs) sounds corny I know...
<b>P0205</b>	Yes. Yeah, yeah...I think of it usually the other way around.	Fatherly images mostly
<b>P0206</b>	Not there yet...	Many I am trying to get rid of like a guy with a white robe and a very angry look on his face...(laughs)...
<b>P0207</b>	Yes, I think so.	All the usual one's... I guess those are more of Jesus than God, well you know what I mean....

Q. 10. Do you think it is important to know God's will?

Q. 11. How do you discern God's will in your life?

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Q.10 &amp; Q. 11 Responses</b>
<b>P0101</b>	Yes, especially for me because I have such a strong self-will. I try to listen in prayer.
<b>P0103</b>	Yes. Third step prayer
<b>P0104</b>	Yes 100%. I try to take it back to Step 6...
<b>P0105</b>	Yes. Prayer...doing the next right thing...when I do that I think that is God's will.
<b>P0106</b>	It is...it is definitely essential in order to stay sober. I have been practicing listening in prayer...my sponsor told me to try that...it is hard...
<b>P0201</b>	Yes, I don't have a problem with that. I don't know if I do...I have to think about that...
<b>P0202</b>	I guess, I don't think I really have so much... my sponsor would probably agree... (laughs)
<b>P0203</b>	100%. I know I will get there- prayer, but haven't really yet. I'm not up to Step Three yet.
<b>P0204</b>	For sure. I meditate a lot asking for it.
<b>P0205</b>	Yes, otherwise I will take over! I work with my sponsor a lot on Step 3 and 11.
<b>P0206</b>	I think so, the steps say so... Not enough (laughs).
<b>P0207</b>	Yes, I think so... I guess I don't actively do it or maybe I did a few times but haven't really made it something I do like regularly...I need to work on that...

Q. 12. Have you had questions about recovery spirituality in light of your Catholic faith?

If yes, what were some of those?

If no, why do you think that is?

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<b>P0101</b>	Not really that I have thought out. I can say I am more interested and present at church.
<b>P0103</b>	No, not until recently...
<b>P0104</b>	Yes! From you!
<b>P0105</b>	Yes, how do I make sense of it religiously?
<b>P0106</b>	Yes. I actually met with my parish priest earlier on in recovery. He was very supportive, I think I was too early in recovery to take in much though. One general question I have – I tend to see them as the same (spirituality and religion) but I am not sure that is accurate. To me what is religious is spiritual and what is spiritual is religious but I might learn otherwise here.
<b>P0201</b>	Yes, I have had some. I have been planning on making an appointment with the priest at my church. I am not sure how much he knows about addiction but I like him. My questions are not so much about the steps or spirituality. A big question I am struggling with right now is about forgiveness. So I would say I have questions about forgiveness because I know it is important for recovery.

<b>P0202</b>	Nothing specific. My sponsor thought I should attend this program because I have a hard time with spirituality in AA. It is mostly that I don't feel anything (like higher power presence) like a lot of my friends in recovery. People talk about feeling better but I haven't felt that yet. Yes, and it has been almost 10 years in recovery.
<b>P0203</b>	Not yet. I know I will. That is who I am but I don't have any specific yet. But the more I get into recovery I will. Who I am meaning I consider myself sort of religious.
<b>P0204</b>	I don't have any specific questions but I am curious... Well one perhaps is why can they not be one in the same?
<b>P0205</b>	Sort of... for instance what part of religion is spiritual? Where do the two separate? Like what makes something religious and what makes something spiritual? Questions like this have come to mind when I anticipated meeting with you.
<b>P0206</b>	I am not sure. Spirituality seems maybe to be easier, if that is right word. I guess I shouldn't be looking for easier. Maybe after this it will be more clear.
<b>P0207</b>	Nothing specific. I would like to know more though. I haven't done very well working on spirituality in recovery. I am hoping I will learn something that will help me in that regard.

### A.3 Post-Program Questionnaire

Participant ID: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Part 1.

**Self-Assessment of Learning:** Think about what you already knew and what you learned from the program, “*A Catechetical Program for Roman Catholics in Twelve Step Recovery Programs.*” Then evaluate your knowledge in each of the following topic areas **Before and After** the program.

**1 = No Knowledge**

**3 = Some Knowledge**

**5 = A Lot of Knowledge**

Before Program					Self-Assessment of Your Knowledge Related to the Topic of:	After Program				
1	2	3	4	5	1. Twelve Step Spirituality	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	2. The <i>Holy Trinity</i> as “Power Greater than Ourselves” as in Steps One and Two.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	3. The Distinctiveness of a Spirituality Rooted in <i>Catholic Faith and Practice.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	4. The Relevance of “ <i>What Happens at Mass</i> ” to Twelve Step Spirituality.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	5. Scripture and its Relevance to our <i>Relationship with God</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	6. The Eucharist and its Relevance to <i>Spirituality</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	7. The Eucharist and its Relevance to <i>Transforming Our Lives</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	8. The Sacrament of Reconciliation as a <i>concrete expression</i> of restoring relationship with God.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	9. Catholic Formulaic Prayers as <i>Informing and Inspiring Our Communication with God.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	10. Prayer as <i>Encounter</i> with God	1	2	3	4	5

**Part 2.**

Think about what you already do and then think about what you learned from the program, “*A Catechetical Program for Roman Catholics in Twelve Step Recovery Programs.*” Then evaluate the likelihood of the following **Before and After** the program.

**1 = Not Likely**

**3 = Somewhat Likely**

**5 = Very Likely**

Before Program					Self-Assessment of the following:	After Program				
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1	2	3	4	5	11. Likelihood of seeking to integrate your Catholic faith with spirituality.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	12. Likelihood of making conscious connections between your <i>Step work</i> and what happens at <i>Mass</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	13. Likelihood of making conscious connections between your <i>Step work</i> and the <i>Sacraments</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	14. Likelihood of engaging in <i>Lectio Divina</i> to deepen your relationship with God.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	15. Likelihood of engaging in <i>Gospel Contemplation</i> to deepen your relationship with God.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	16. Likelihood of engaging in <i>Scripture Meditation</i> to deepen your relationship with God.	1	2	3	4	5

1	2	3	4	5	17. Likelihood of including specifically <i>Catholic prayers</i> in your daily prayer activity.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	18. Likelihood of looking to specifically religious resources for <i>spiritual sustenance or nourishment</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	19. Likelihood of looking to specifically religious resources for <i>spiritual guidance</i> .	1	2	3	4	5

20. Consider the following statement and choose one that applies – “*My Catholic faith has something to offer my recovery.*”

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

**Appendix A.3a. Participant Responses**

(Score sheets for responses to questions 1-19 are included as Appendix D.1)

Q. 20. Consider the following statement and choose one that applies – “*My Catholic faith has something to offer my recovery.*”

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Participant	Q. 11 Pre-Program	Q. 20 Post-Program	Difference
P0101	Undecided	Strongly Agree	2
P0103	Undecided	Agree	1
P0104	Undecided	Agree	1
P0105	Agree	Strongly Agree	1
P0106	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	0
P0201	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	0
P0202	Strongly Agree	Agree	1
P0203	Undecided	Strongly Agree	1
P0204	Agree	Agree	1
P0205	Undecided	Agree	1
P0206	Undecided	Agree	1
P0207	Undecided	Strongly Agree	1

## A.4 Program Evaluation

Thank you for taking part in this program. Below are a series of questions for you to evaluate the presentation and the facilitator. This evaluation is anonymous and your honest feedback is encouraged and appreciated.

When complete, place in manila envelope on the side table by the door.

---

**For each item below, please circle only a single appropriate response.**

1. The program was well organized.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

2. The material was presented in an organized manner.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

3. The material covered was relevant to my recovery.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

4. The exercises were relevant to the material.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

5. The presenter was knowledgeable on the topic.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

6. I expect to use the knowledge and insights gained from this program in my recovery.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

7. Given the topic, was the program:

Too short                  Just right                  Too long

8. Please rate the following:

a. Program Overall:                  Poor    Fair    Good    Very Good    Excellent

b. Meeting Space:                  Poor    Fair    Good    Very Good    Excellent

c. Visuals:                      Poor   Fair   Good   Very Good   Excellent

d. Handouts:                    Poor   Fair   Good   Very Good   Excellent

9. What did you most appreciate/enjoy/think was best about the program?

---

---

10. What could have been improved about the program?

---

---

11. Any additional comments?

---

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**Thank you for your feedback. Please remember to place  
in the envelope before you leave.**



	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree

Q. 7. Given the topic, was the program:

Participant	Given the topic, was the program: Too short; Just right; Too long.
Anonymous	Too Short
	Just Right
	Just Right
	Too Short
	Just Right
	Just Right
	Too Short
	Too Short
	Just Right
	Too Short
	Just Right
	Too Short

Q. 8. Please rate the following:

- a. Program Overall:            Poor    Fair    Good    Very Good    Excellent
- b. Meeting Space:            Poor    Fair    Good    Very Good    Excellent
- c. Visuals:                    Poor    Fair    Good    Very Good    Excellent
- d. Handouts:                 Poor    Fair    Good    Very Good    Excellent

Participant	a. Program Overall	b. Meeting Space	c. Visuals	d. Handouts
Anonymous	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
	Excellent	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Excellent	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Excellent	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Excellent	Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Excellent	Very Good	Very Good	Good

	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Excellent
	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Very Good
	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
	Excellent	Excellent	Very Good	Very Good
	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

Q. 9. What did you most appreciate/enjoy/think was best about the program?

**Participant Responses- Open Ended Question:**

1. It was so refreshing to talk about God in a meaningful discussion. I knew a lot of this but had forgotten so much. I appreciated being reminded of everything I loved about my faith/my church
2. I appreciate that it didn't make it seem like you had to pick religion or spirituality. It was very complementary of AA and 12 steps.
3. I was not all that sure religion had anything to offer my recovery – I believe it does now. That means a lot.
4. The session on liturgy/Mass. It has more [?meaning (not legible)] now.
5. The group discussion. I don't get a chance for this. It was meaningful. Kathleen (is a ) great leader
6. It helped make sense of a lot of things for me. The best was going through the breakdown of Mass. I liked or enjoyed very much going to Mass and sharing about it.
7. Being able to talk to someone about God and my recovery.
8. Everything! It made me want to know more about going to Mass and spirituality. Made me want to ask more questions. I loved the exercises. Very helpful.
9. Kathleen's passion for this. Even though I am somewhat unsure about religion it was refreshing to hear her. It was inspiring.
10. Kathleen was great! Her knowledge and enthusiasm made it very special.
11. I learned more about religion than I ever did.
12. The meetings on prayer.

Q. 10. What could have been improved about the program?

**Participant Responses – Open Ended Question:**

1. Maybe if it could go longer than 6 weeks. There seems like so much we can learn given more time. I think this was a good beginning or introduction but would have liked there to be more meetings to spend more time to understand it and make it a part of my recovery.
2. Nothing. Perhaps should be offered by parishes. I would attend!
3. Would like to see it keep going but otherwise really nothing.
4. I suggest making it longer. 12 weeks at least.
5. Nothing.
6. Nothing!
7. This should be an on-going meeting!

- 
8. Make a Part II.
  9. Nothing.
  10. Keep it the way it is.
- 

Q. 11. Any additional comments?

**Participant Responses – Open Ended Question:**

1. This should happen at Churches where they hold AA meetings. It was very helpful to me.
  2. I really loved Kathlyn – she made this a very special program. Amazing presence!
  3. Thank you for the opportunity. It was meaningful to me.
  4. I am grateful.
  5. Thank you Kathleen. Great Spirit.
  6. Want to know more.
  7. I loved it.
  8. Glad I did this.
-

## Appendix B.1

Packet – 1

### Twelve Steps of A.A.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol-that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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## Appendix B2.

Packet – 2

### Suggestions for the Practice of Prayer

1. Take a moment of silence in preparation.
2. If you are so inclined, bow your head and/or make the Sign of the Cross, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”
3. Call to mind the presence of God.
4. Prayer can be spontaneous or a common Catholic prayer such as below. There are numerous resources for specific intentions. (Examples included in recommended reading list).

---

#### Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I  
cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And the wisdom to know the difference.  
(short version)

Living one day at a time,  
Enjoying one moment at a time,  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,  
Taking as Jesus did,  
This sinful world as it is,  
Not as I would have it,  
Trusting that You will make all things right,  
If I surrender to Your will,  
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,  
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.\*  
Amen.

\* The Serenity Prayer has been attributed to  
Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)

---

The following are familiar prayers of the  
Catholic Tradition

#### Our Father

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed by the name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth, as it is  
in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass  
against us,  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. Amen

#### Hail Mary

Hail, Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord is with thee,  
Blessed art thou among women  
and blessed is the fruit of thy  
Womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death. Amen

#### Glory Be

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning, is now,  
and will be forever. Amen

#### The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father  
Almighty, Creator of heaven  
and earth, and in Jesus Christ,  
his only Son, our Lord, who  
was conceived by the Holy  
Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was  
crucified, died and was buried; he  
descended into hell; on the third  
day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven, and is  
seated at the right hand of God  
the Father almighty; from there  
he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

#### **Angelus**

V. The angel of the Lord declared  
Unto Mary.  
R. and she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail, Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord is with thee,  
Blessed art thou among women  
and blessed is the fruit of thy  
Womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death. Amen

V. Behold the handmaid of the  
Lord.  
R. Be it done unto me according to  
thy word.

Hail, Mary.

V. And the Word was made flesh.  
R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.  
R. That we may be made worthy of the  
promises of Christ.

Let us pray:  
Pour forth we beseech thee, O  
Lord, thy grace into our hearts; that we,  
To who the Incarnation of  
Christ, thy Son, was made known  
by the message of an angel, may by  
his Passion and Cross be brought  
to the glory of his Resurrection.  
Through the same Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.

#### **Act of Hope**

O Lord God, I hope by your  
grace for the pardon of all my  
sins and after life here to gain  
eternal happiness because you  
have promised it who are infinitely  
powerful, faithful, kind, and  
merciful. In this hope I

intend to live and die. Amen

#### **Act of Love**

O Lord God, I love you above  
All things and I love my neighbor  
for your sake because you are the  
highest, infinite and perfect good,  
worthy of all my love. In this hope I  
intend to live and die. Amen

#### **St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit**

Breathe in us, O Holy Spirit, that our  
thoughts may all be holy.  
Act in us, O Holy Spirit,  
that our work, too may be holy. Draw  
our hearts, O Holy Spirit,  
to defend all that is holy. Guard  
us, then O Holy Spirit, that  
we always may be holy. Amen

#### **Saint Francis Prayer**

Lord, make me an instrument  
Of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let  
me sow love; where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith; where there is  
despair, hope; where there is darkness,  
light; where there is sadness, joy.  
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; it is in dying that  
we are born again to eternal life.

*Catholic prayers in this handout are taken from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, copyright © 2000, Libreria Editrice Vaticana – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. All Rights Reserved. Used with Permission.*

## **Appendix B3.**

Packet - 3

### **Scripture**

Engaging in prayer, meditation and contemplation with Sacred Scripture deepens our relationship with Christ as we come to know him in an ever more real way and how to become more like him. By bringing Sacred Scripture into these activities we enrich them with the presence of the Lord. The following are selected passages that might help you get started. There are also many resources available to guide the integration of Scripture into your practices. A few are listed at the bottom.

#### **God's Power and Strength**

Psalm 121:1-2 "I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth."

Psalm 147:5 "Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit."

1 Cor. 6:14 "By his power, God raised the Lord from the dead and he will raise us also."

2 Cor. 12:8-11 "Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

*2 Corinthians 13:4* "He is not weak toward you but powerful in you. For indeed he was crucified out of weakness, but he lives by the power of God. So also we are weak in him, but toward you we shall live with him by the power of God."

*Matt. 19:26* "Jesus looked at them and said, 'For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible.'"

*Ephesians 3:20-21* "Now to him who is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. May he be given glory in the church and Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages."

#### **God's Love**

*John 3:16-17* "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

*Romans 5:8* "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

*Ephesians 2:4-5* "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved..."

*Zephaniah 3:17* “The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.”

*1 John 4:16-18* “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains God and God in him.”

### **God’s Will**

*Romans 12:2* “Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.”

*Mt 7:7-8* “Ask, and it shall be given you; search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened.”

*Philippians 2:12-13* “Work for your salvation in fear and trembling. It is God, for his own loving purposes, who puts the will and the action into you.”

*Proverbs 3:5-6* “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths.

### **Forgiveness**

*Ephesians 1:7* “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.”

*Colossians 1:13-14* For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

*Mk 11:25* “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

*Lk 6:35-37* “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expect nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the most high; for he himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged: and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.”

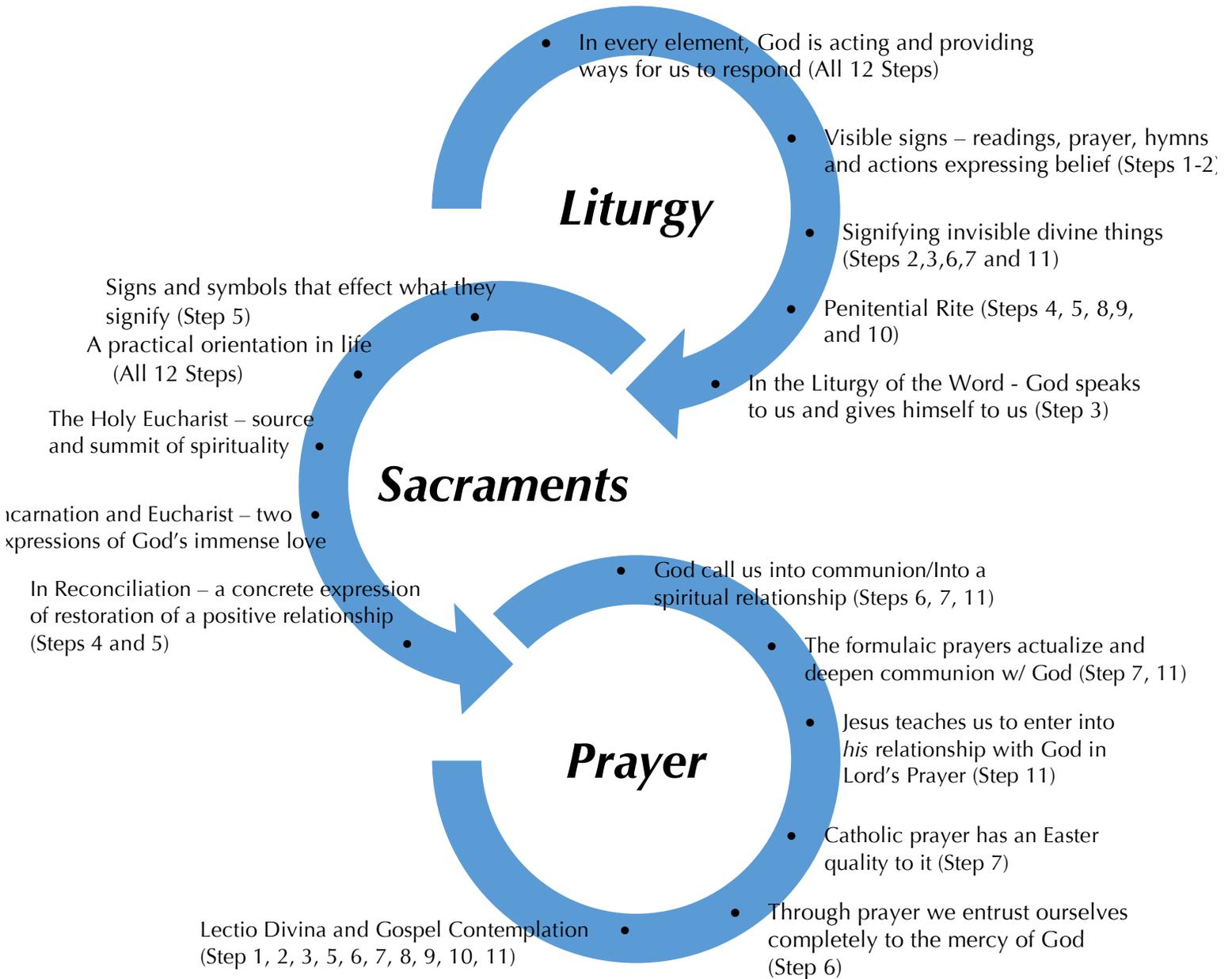
*Finding God in All Things: A Companion to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.* By William Barry.

*Divine Therapy and Addiction.* Thomas Keating. In Appendix B of this book Fr. Keating included a method for centering prayer. You can read more about him and access other similar resources on the website: [www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org).

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**Appendix B4.**  
Packet handout - 4

Catholic spirituality is a liturgical, sacramental and scriptural spirituality. It is both personal and communal and includes the concrete experience of responding to God's invitation to be in relationship to him and to each other through his example and to the concrete encounter of him through various events in the liturgy, through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist and through prayer



## Appendix C.1

Kathleen Kelley, MDiv., LMFT  
343 West 14<sup>th</sup> Street, 3FW  
New York, NY 10014  
212-252-4121 [Kelley1224@aol.com](mailto:Kelley1224@aol.com)

Address  
Address  
Address

Dear Colleague,

This letter is to invite you to share the enclosed (or attached) announcement with anyone you think might have an interest in volunteering to participate in a workshop series. This year I am hoping to finish my work on my Doctor of Ministry degree from Catholic University. As you may recall, the focus of my study has been in pastoral counseling, including spiritual care and my experience has included working in a professional capacity with the recovering community.

To complete my degree, I have developed a project in ministry that is aimed at guiding the integration of Twelve Step spirituality and religious faith for Catholics. I am looking for volunteers who are Roman Catholic, active or not, and who are in Twelve Step recovery. The volunteers will be asked to attend a four-week educational series, one evening per week for two hours. The educational series will cover the fundamentals of Catholic spirituality such as liturgy, the sacraments and prayer and how they might relate to recovery spirituality. I am attempting to evaluate the need for adult catechesis for recovering Catholics who desire to integrate their religious faith with their recovery.

I appreciate in advance your sharing this invitation with anyone you think might be interested. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you have as well.

Regards

Kathleen Kelley

## Appendix C.2

# LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS TO ATTEND FREE RECOVERY EDUCATIONAL SERIES

I am looking for volunteers who are Roman Catholic, (active or not) and are in Twelve Step recovery to attend a series of six two-hour workshops on integrating Catholic faith and recovery spirituality.

I am developing a program to facilitate guiding Roman Catholics in recovery on the integration of their faith and their recovery. I have found in my work in the field that recovering people at times have questions about how the two may relate. If you are interested in learning about spirituality from a Catholic religious perspective and interested in learning ways to develop a stronger connection between your religious faith and Twelve Step spirituality this program may be of interest to you.

I am offering this program as a free service as it is part of a study I am conducting in satisfaction of the degree requirements of my graduate program. I am a Doctor of Ministry candidate at the Catholic University of America and also a licensed psychotherapist working in the field of recovery for 10+ years.

Participation in the program will be confidential. In addition to attending the six, two-hour sessions; you will be asked to evaluate the program and to share feedback on your experience.

If you are interested and would like more information, please contact me at 212-252-4121 or email [kelly1224@aol.com](mailto:kelly1224@aol.com).

Kathleen Kelley, MDiv., LMFT

### Appendix C.3

## RE: Including "The Twelve Steps of AA in dissertation"

**Smith, Darlene** <smithd@aa.org>

To: "kathleenkelley1224@gmail.com" [kathleenkelley1224@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenkelley1224@gmail.com)

Dear Kathleen,

Thank you for your email in which you requested permission to reprint the Twelve Steps of A in Twelve Steps."

A.A. has no objection to your reprinting its Twelve Steps, in all methods of delivery, and we Steps:

"The Twelve Steps are reprinted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, has reviewed or approved the contents of this publication, or that A.A. necessarily a only - use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities which does not imply otherwise. Additionally, while A.A. is a spiritual program, A.A. is not or specific religious belief."

If you are in agreement with the above, please respond at your earliest convenience by replying to

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

**Sincerely,**

**Darlene**

Darlene Smith

Intellectual Property Administrator

A.A. World Services, Inc.

475 Riverside Drive

New York, NY 10115

Direct: 212.870.3538 | Main: 212.870.3400 | Fax: 212.870.3003

## Appendix E.1

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#	0207	☐					1		1			☐			2	
		8		3	1		21		17			3	6	2	1	37
		<b>Modal:</b> 1 <b>Median:</b> <b>Mean:</b> 2							<b>Median:</b> 2.0 <b>Mean:</b> 1.4 <b>SD:</b>		<b>Mode:</b> 3 <b>Median:</b> <b>Mean:</b> 3.1					

		BEFORE DISTRIBUTION								AFTER DISTRIBUTION					
# 15		1	2	3	4	5	Value	DIFFERENCE		1	2	3	4	5	Value
1	101	□					1		2			□			3
2	103	□					1		3				□		4
3	104	□					1		3				□		4
4	105		□				2		1				□		4
5	106		□				2		0			□			3
6	201				□		4		0				□		4
7	202	□					1		1		□				2
8	203				□		4		1					□	5
9	204	□					1		2			□			3
#	205	□					1		2			□			3
#	206	□					1		1		□				2
#	207	□					1		2			□			3
		8	2	2			20	18			2	5	4	1	40
		<b>Modal:</b> <b>Median:</b> <b>Mean:</b> 2						<b>Median:</b> 1.5 <b>Mean:</b> 1.5 <b>SD:</b>		<b>Mode:</b> <b>Median:</b> <b>Mean:</b> ##					

		BEFORE DISTRIBUTION								AFTER DISTRIBUTION					
# 16		1	2	3	4	5	Value	DIFFERENCE		1	2	3	4	5	Value
1	101	□					1		2			□			3
2	103	□					1		3				□		4
3	104	□					1		3				□		4
4	105			□			3		1				□		4
5	106			□			3		1				□		4
6	201				□		4		0				□		4
7	202	□					1		1		□				2
8	203				□		4		1					□	5
9	204	□					1		2			□			3
#	205	□					1		2			□			3
#	206	□					1		2			□			3
#	207	□					1		1		□				2
		8		2	2		22	19			2	4	5	1	41
		<b>Modal:</b> 1 <b>Median:</b> <b>Mean:</b> 2						<b>Median:</b> 2 <b>Mean:</b> ## <b>SD:</b>		<b>Mode:</b> 4 <b>Median:</b> <b>Mean:</b> ##					

BEFORE DISTRIBUTION							AFTER DISTRIBUTION						
# 17	1	2	3	4	5	Value	DIFFERENCE	1	2	3	4	5	Value
1	101		□			3	2					□	5
2	103	□				1	2			□			3
3	104		□			3	2					□	5
4	105			□		4	1					□	5
5	106			□		4	1					□	5
6	201			□		4	1					□	5
7	202			□		4	1					□	5
8	203	□				1	2			□			3
9	204			□		4	1					□	5
#	205		□			3	2					□	5
#	206	□				2	2				□		4
#	207		□			3	2					□	5
	2	1	4	5		36	19			2	1	9	55
	Modal: 4							Mode:					
	Median:						Median: ##	Median:					
	Mean: 3						Mean: 1.6	Mean: ##					
							SD:						

BEFORE DISTRIBUTION							AFTER DISTRIBUTION						
# 18	1	2	3	4	5	Value	DIFFERENCE	1	2	3	4	5	Value
1	101		□			2	3					□	5
2	103	□				1	2			□			3
3	104		□			3	2					□	5
4	105		□			3	2					□	5
5	106			□		4	1					□	5
6	201			□		4	1					□	5
7	202	□				1	2			□			3
8	203			□		4	1					□	5
9	204	□				2	2				□		4
#	205	□				2	1			□			3
#	206	□				2	2				□		4
#	207	□				2	1			□			3
	2	5	2	3		30	20			4	2	6	50
	Modal: 2							Mode: 5					
	Median:						Median: ##	Median:					
	Mean: 3						Mean: 1.7	Mean: ##					
							SD:						

		BEFORE DISTRIBUTION								AFTER DISTRIBUTION					
#	# 19	1	2	3	4	5	value	DIFFERENCE		1	2	3	4	5	value
1	0101		□				2		2				□		4
2	0103	□					1		2			□			3
3	0104			□			3		2					□	5
4	0105			□			3		2					□	5
5	0106			□			3		2					□	5
6	0201				□		4		1					□	5
7	0202	□					1		2			□			3
8	0203					□	5		0					□	5
9	0204		□				2		2				□		4
#	0205		□				2		1			□			3
#	0206		□				2		1				□		4
#	0207		□				2		1				□		4
		<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>30</b>		<b>18</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>50</b>
		<b>Modal: 2</b>								<b>Mode: 5</b>					
		<b>Median:</b>						<b>Median: 2.0</b>		<b>Median:</b>					
		<b>Mean: 3</b>						<b>Mean: 1.5</b>		<b>Mean: 4.2</b>					

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