

Barn Mass

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straw from the barn and to fashion a cross. He asked each to save the cross until that Easter Sunday, one day in the future, when the parish would assemble in a parish church to celebrate the fulfillment of what was beginning that first night of Lent.

The 54-year-old priest also related an unusual coincidence, one of which he was unaware until very recently, that it was on an Ash Wednesday that St. Elizabeth Ann Seton entered St. Peter's Church in New York City and was so impressed by the ceremony that she began her own journey to the Faith.

The saint, canonized seven years ago, was born an Episcopalian and became a Catholic convert.

On sabbatical last year in Rome, Father Amann came into possession of a medal of St. Elizabeth blessed by Pope John Paul II. He resolved that he would give the medal to the first of his new parishioners whom he met.

That turned out to be Alan Pogrowszewski, a tenth grader at Brockport and son of the family who hosted the Mass.

In his sermon, Father Amann cited the words of St. Elizabeth to the first members of her congregation, the Sisters of Charity:

"You are now in your first set out. Be above the vain fears of nature and the efforts of your enemy. You are children of eternity. Your immortal crown awaits you, and the best of Fathers awaits there to reward your duty and love. You may indeed sow here in tears, but you may be sure there to reap in joy."

The parish is now looking for a residence for its pastor, and a place for regular worship. Also assisting at the Mass last week were Robert Kuter, Linda Roggy and Marie Elphick.



Alan Pogrowszewski, whose family hosted the Mass, received a medal of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton from Father Amann. The new pastor had resolved earlier to give the medal to the first parishioner he met.

Seven Last Words

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even trying to be honest and upright. In business, school and neighborhoods, we tend to say: "Where is God? He isn't fair and just!" Our loving Father pours out his gifts freely, unconditionally. The words of Christ on the cross along with the story of the Prodigal Son should put an end to our criticisms and jealousies. As Jesus states to some workers: "Are you envious because I am generous?"

We might be tempted to say: "What's the use? Why should I be good? Does it make any difference if I try to improve Lent with prayer, fasting, and study?"

Yes. A mature and normal person naturally responds to love in words and actions. We might not be able to merit heaven, but we can show our gratitude and acceptance. Good works flow from faith. Our lenten deeds should be a

natural response, rather than an obligation or duty.

Like a mature child at home, once he recognizes all the "goodies" freely given, he automatically and freely gives thanks. Some children grow up and learn sooner than others. So also in God's family.

The Dameans beautifully express these thoughts in words and music: "Love that's freely given wants to freely be received. All the love you've poured on us can hardly be believed. And all that we can offer you is thanks."

At one time the generosity, goodness and forgiveness of Jesus on the cross puzzled me. Now I see an infant in Apalachin or in Rochester and understand. It is pure unconditional love. And all I can say is "Thanks."

TEENS AND BOOZE:
The Hard Facts
By Joan M. Smith

Last in a four-part series

Tracy is a survivor. At 21 she is an articulate, vibrant person with a bright future, but it wasn't always that way. She was an over-achiever, active in school, and participated in sports, but an attempted suicide at 15, a zero self-image, and an addiction to alcohol clouded her adolescent years.

She was 13 when she had her first drink. "It felt good," she said and added, "It gave me the courage to go up and talk to people, something I wouldn't normally do."

In a recent interview with the Courier-Journal, she told how drinking made her realize she could be funny. "I would go to any lengths to be a joke," she said, and didn't care whether people were laughing with her or at her as long as she was having fun and people were accepting her.

Her drinking at that time, however, wasn't an all-the-time thing. It was in her junior year when she attended a graduation party that "a switch was turned on," and this, she said, was how addiction happens. Then life becomes a vicious cycle.

At the party, Tracy had one beer and then couldn't get enough. She drank for hours and then blacked out. Blacking out is not a physical collapse but a term used in describing a situation where there is so much alcohol in the system that the recording brain cells are destroyed and the person can't remember what was said, done, or where he's been. Luckily, Tracy woke up in a classmate's home and, although frightened, her friends told her it happened to everyone. It was part of drinking. From then on Tracy's life went downhill — not the stereotyped sudden avalanche, but a gradual sliding.

She was drinking when she began her senior year and blamed it on "senioritis." She and her friends would go to the park during lunch hours and drink. "If I made it back to school, all right and if I didn't all right, too."

Without trying she had always been a B-plus student, but her grades dropped to a C-plus. Although in the mornings she would promise herself she would go to school and do well, the promise would never be kept. She had friends, she was being accepted, was always busy, and was having fun, so why stop drinking? She even cherished her nickname "Alkie" and was furious when another classmate was chosen as the class "Alkie" by her peers. "My social life was around booze," Tracy said.

Things changed when she went to college. She no longer was the older looking girl who was accepted because she could go into liquor stores to obtain drinks for her friends. Everyone was older and could buy his or her own alcohol and her key to acceptance was lost. She went to drugs. By the end of the first year her grades were low,

and she had used \$800 of her student loan for drink and pills. She didn't go back to school but went to work in a liquor store.

Always looking for an image, she would buy only expensive, imported wines, rationalizing they were for investment because they would be worth more in a few years. But she drank more than she kept. There was no reality to those years, she said. Always in pursuit of image, Tracy would treat herself to expensive dinners, buying rounds of drinks for her friends. She drank gin and tonic because that was considered a classy drink, "and a classy drinker wouldn't be an alcoholic," she said.

She described herself as a binge drinker, drinking only on weekends or if there was a party during the week. Tracy disagreed with the TV stereotype drunk. According to her, a person doesn't have to be out of it all the time to be an alcoholic.

She returned to college, but started flunking subjects; and in order to save face, she shifted the blame for her failures. She used as excuses to her professors, a sister leaving home and her mother who was recovering through AA. Here Tracy stated that there is a high risk factor for children who come from families where there is alcoholism (some statistics say 60 percent), not because of heredity, but because of growing up in that type atmosphere.

"I never thought too much of myself," she said, and after the incident with her professors, I really hated myself. Then she visited a few AA meetings with her mother.

"I felt good going to the meetings," she said. People just wouldn't say hello, but they would stop and talk to her. She started asking questions at the meetings, wanting someone to tell her she was an alcoholic because she was frightened to make the awareness herself. But by a gradual process, Tracy came to the realization she was an alcoholic and decided to do something about it. She continued with the meetings; one every day for 90 days, and after nine months of sobriety she came to a difficult step — re-evaluation of her friends. In her crowd they either talked about drinking or were drinking. She realized there had to be a change.

"I can't take myself seriously, but I have to take my disease of alcohol and drugs darn seriously."

In discussing the recovery process, Tracy recalled how boring the first few months were. Seven days a week, week after week, going to school, eating meals, attending AA meetings, watching TV and going to bed. And always the nagging question, "How am I going to have fun?" Now, however, with friends made through the AA she is having more fun than when she drank. They get together and go camping, bowling, roller skating, and to the park to play frisbee, but instead of drinking gin, Tracy drinks soda pop.

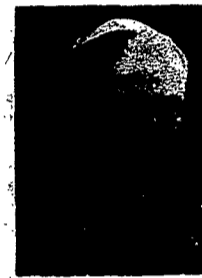
AA, she said, made her realize it wasn't the end of her life. Before, while drinking, life was something she had to go through, now she takes it as it comes. During her recovery period the compulsion to drink lasted three months, but the obsession with alcohol lasted a year. Now, after two years of sobriety, there is only the occasional mental flash of a gin and tonic.

Tracy goes to AA meetings to keep the disease of drinking from sneaking up on her and also to keep growing. When you drink, she explained, all growth — mental, emotional, social — stops.

Looking back over those lost teenage years, Tracy realizes that a lot of things she should have gained, she didn't. "I was wrapped up in images rather than people," she said.

Picking up the pieces is a formidable task for those trying to kick the alcohol habit, but it is what made Tracy a survivor and she doesn't mince words about it.

"If I hadn't stopped drinking I wouldn't have seen 21," she said, and warned, "If you are a young alcoholic you won't live to be an old alcoholic."



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