



MINISTRY, SACRAMENT AND ALCOHOLISM
And Guest House

The Reverend Joseph Tobin opened the Sixth Annual Guest House Summer Conference addressing the problem, *“How does alcoholism impact priestly life, ministry, community life, and the efficacy of ministry?”* Based on his priestly experience of twenty-two years in congregational leadership, his recent sixteen years as Superior General in Rome of the Redemptorist Order counting a worldwide membership of 5,500 priests and brothers in over seventy-six countries, he emphasized the aspects of priestly and religious life that may well reinforce and “ease the slide into addiction”, and what leadership ought to do to intervene, and “why a life-giving project like Guest House deserves support”.
Occupational hazards of priests and religious.

Fr. Tobin expressed the belief that clerical and religious life-style reinforces the progression of alcoholism by providing a rationale for drinking as well as protecting people from honest appraisal of “the extent life has gone off the rails”. Complicating these factors is “training that may strengthen this denial and impede entrance into a therapeutic program or Alcoholics Anonymous. Ignorance of such pernicious building blocks in the wall of denial will serve to accelerate increasing incapacitation, leading to permanent disability and premature death. What “greases the skids” in this progressive illness can be the central role alcohol plays in priestly life coupled with the “anonymity of priestly and religious life, built on an ethic of politeness that allows pathological manifestations to progress unchecked.” This leads to the situation where authority fails to intervene until “the afflicted person is already in the grip of full-blown alcoholism or other types of addiction.”

“An anonymous community life, founded upon superficial and deficient communication, can exacerbate an occupational hazard of priests and religious: what Pope John Paul II termed the sort of ‘loneliness’, which is the product of various difficulties and which in turn creates further difficulties.” The inability to “speak openly can pursue a confrere even after death”. This inability to address the “problem” reinforces the denial system in the alcoholic and the community. The stress and demands of priestly life, loneliness, the misunderstanding of family and colleagues contribute to the walls of defense in the alcoholic and others fail to see the suffering individual beneath the destructive behaviors. Fr. Tobin emphasized that only, “the grace of God and the love of our brothers and sisters can pierce the web of denial”.

Once past the initial crises and into recovery, the person may be able to overcome another dilemma, that of intellectualism that leads to, “knowing a great deal about God, but not knowing God”, experienced perhaps even more so by the alcoholic distorting his spiritual life and being one who is, “transformed into something else: a man behind the mask”. Sobriety is an opportunity for realization of the “deepest ideals, the dreams through God first spoken in the depths of our hearts. Sobriety is like coming home”.

What is the return on the investment in intervention, treatment, & recovery?

“The lifestyle and quality of ministry of a recovering alcoholic priest or religious can be a boon to the diocese or congregation.” Critical to the process of continued recovery is the involvement of the person in Alcoholics Anonymous according to Fr. Tobin. “The principles of AA can serve” as a catalyst for growth in the spiritual patrimony of his congregation or in the Sacrament of Orders”. Fr. Tobin concluded his talk with mention of the iconography of Guest House that can be perceived as, “two hands holding a head bowed in despair or the same hands raising a cup of thanksgiving...reminding one of the power of a loving God.”



Most Rev. Joseph Tobin, C.Ss.R. is the present Superior General of the Redemptorists Order. His pastoral experience includes the parochial apostolate, community organizing, retreat preaching for youth and lay adults, *Cursillos deCristianidad*, the archdiocesan tribunal and advocacy for peace, justice and the integrity of creation. The XXII General Chapter chose him as Superior General in 1997 and re-elected him Superior General in 2003.

SAVE THE DATE!

Mark your calendar to attend next year's Leadership Conferences:
January 22-24, 2008.....New Orleans, Louisiana
July 14-16, 2008.....Minneapolis, Minnesota
For more information about these events, please call
Colleen Richards at 800-626-6910, ext 1207.

Inside This Issue

Highlights from
The Sixth Annual
Leadership Conference
on Addictions

***“Addiction &
Community Life”***

Presented by the
**Guest House
Institute**
Minneapolis,
Minnesota
July 9-11, 2007

Back Cover

Guest House Institute
created to assist the
Church

***A Special Thank
You to the Dircks
Foundation and the
Bailey Foundation
for financially
supporting this
Conference.***

6th Annual Leadership Conference - Another Success!

They came to learn. They came to share. They met up with old friends and made new ones. They joined in fellowship, prayer, and even had “free time” to enjoy the vibrant Minneapolis locale.

“They” were the 125 attendees and participants at the 6th Annual Guest House Leadership Conference, entitled “Addiction and Community Life.”



Michael Morton, Executive Director
Guest House Institute with his
brother Rev. William Morton

Across the board, the attendees demonstrated their ongoing commitment to gathering fresh perspectives to better fulfill their vocations and work in dealing with the problem of addiction in priesthood and religious life.

Held in Minneapolis, Minnesota at the Crowne Plaza Northstar Hotel, the three-day conference was attended by individuals from all facets of the “recovery community.”

Conference attendees were primarily Clergy and Religious men and women in leadership roles who are involved in the care and ministry of addicted individuals. Others included administrators from Catholic Church organizations with similarly responsible roles.

To date, more than 600 individuals have attended the Summer Leadership Conferences since they were launched by Guest House in 2000.

Once again this year, the Conference was considerably aided by the generosity of the Robert and Carolyn Dircks Foundation which provided funds toward the Conference material costs. This year the Dircks Foundation was joined by the Bailey Foundation, which provided a grant to assist local individuals involved in addictions and recovery work with attendance expenses.*



Registration time

As always, we were especially pleased with the level of expertise and the overall caliber of our presenters. These sixteen noteworthy faculty members converged from around the nation (and Rome!) and brought a broad spectrum of perspectives to the table. It was a special privilege to have with us as our keynote speaker the Most Rev. Joseph Tobin, who came all the way from The Vatican to join us.

* The Robert & Joan Dircks Foundation is located in Mountain Lakes, New Jersey. The Bailey Foundation is located in Eagan, Minnesota.

Addiction: A Community and Social Concern By Michael Morton

All too frequently many of us approach the problem we face in another as “their problem”, and feel inconvenienced or annoyed. The history of social concern regarding the abuse and misuse of alcohol appears to date back as far as recorded history and often related is the impact upon behavior and negative consequences. In spite of the evidence, and experience of our culture, we continue to address problems in individuals and mostly minimize or ignore the problems in the greater community or congregation.

The theme of this year’s Conference attempted to do justice to the more global nature and communal aspects of addiction, community, and priestly ministry. Borrowing some facts from Joseph Califano’s recent book, **The High Society** (2007), we addressed the magnitude of the problem in American society and the current trend toward an ever increasing number of younger people being socialized in ways that will ensure the next generation of addicts. Califano summarizes the research on the young and states the sad dilemma of what we know yet fail to do something about to prevent addictions. His prophetic challenge rings equally true for those in religious life, particularly with respect toward the next generation of clergy and religious and the process of human formation.

Critical to the discussion of intervention, healing and recovery are the quality of life issues in communities and dioceses as well as the American culture at large. A culture of materialism, consumerism and the “commoditization” of every aspect of life from intimacy to spiritual self-help products is a breeding ground for addictions and compulsions. “Priestly formation takes place in a given ecclesial and historical context. Identifying that context is a critical task for giving specific shape to particular programs of formation. In the United States at this time, there is a paradox of a widespread thirst for spirituality and, at the same time, a prevailing secular ethos. From another perspective, the nation finds itself more intensely called to build a “civilization of like and love”, even as it struggles against a “culture of death.”

Some social commentators would suggest that modern society has been eulogized as being in the twilight of collective social life (Gitlin 1995). No longer do individuals feel a sense of community and commonality with others that naturally produce conditions of mutual trust and commitment. The radical transformation of society in this epoch has created a sense of alienation in which the loss of meaning and continuity is frightening and disconcerting for many. The impact of these changes is of course experienced by clergy and religious as well as those served.

The first step in addressing any significant problem is the acknowledgement of the problem and the willingness of all involved to participate in the solution. Addiction and Community Life emphasized the need for all to be involved in the process of not only intervention and treatment, but to work toward the creation of healthy religious communities and presbyteries that contain and limit the damages of alcoholism and other addictions. The Conference ended on a hopeful request by attendees to participate in that next stage and move beyond that of crises to one of healing and recovery for communities and dioceses as well as the individuals who suffer from addictions and compulsions.



The Health and Social Impact of Growing Up With Adverse Childhood Experiences The Human and Economic Costs of the Status Quo

Dr. Robert Anda, Co-Principal Investigator The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, related the consequences of the “common stressful and traumatic exposures affecting the neurodevelopment of children.” Chief among these adverse experiences is growing up in an alcoholic household and with substance abusing mentally ill parents. Among other adverse experiences are parental discord, divorce, and emotional, psychological, sexual, and physical abuse.



Dr. Robert Anda

Currently a senior researcher at the Center for Disease Control and concerned with the social nature and endemic problems facing society today by the inordinate numbers of people growing up with these adverse experiences, Dr. Anda stressed the life-long effects upon the person’s capacities for relational health and the added burden of the recipient of several or many adverse experiences in trying to overcome mental, physical and emotional or addictive disorders.

According to Dr. Anda, “The key concept underlying the Study is that stressful or traumatic childhood experiences such as abuse, neglect, witnessing domestic violence, to growing up with alcohol or other substance abuse, mental illness, parental discord, or crime in the home are common pathways to social, emotional, and cognitive impairments that lead to increased risk of unhealthy behaviors, risk of violence or re-victimization, disease, disability and premature mortality. We know now from breakthroughs in neurobiology that adverse childhood experiences disrupt neuron-development and can have lasting effects on brain structure and function—the biologic pathways that likely explain the strength of the findings from the ACE Study.

The relevance of the study for attendees and those in Church leadership was emphasized by the report in that the population studied was a generally well educated middle class population. The Study found that these adverse experiences and the number of them did not necessarily discriminate between social economic groups or classes of people. There was a direct correlation between the number of adverse experiences in childhood and the “risk of numerous health and social problems throughout the lifespan”. These problems are a Who’s Who?” list of problems that encompass the priorities of many agencies, public and private. The list of problems and consequent medical conditions was extensive and very



Conference participant

familiar to those who work with addicted religious and clergy.

The implications for leadership was described as profound due to the nature of the hidden or latency of the problems that emerge latter in life.



Also Presenting....

Other faculty presenters at the 2007 Leadership Conference included:

Frank Bernt, Ph.D. spoke on the predictors of success and recidivism for an alcohol rehabilitation Center for Catholic priests. He outlined the direction to be taken for research and prevention of addiction among the clergy using existing histories and case records.

Msgr. William Clausen and Rev. Paul White discussed how addiction and recovery offer opportunities to bridge generational gaps and conflicts in the true spirit of genuine love and concern in the presbyterate and religious life building generational solidarity in a conflicted culture.



Msgr. Clausen

Rev. Arthur Espelage, O.F.M., J.C.D., former President of the American Canon Law Society addressed the problems facing leadership involving power, money, and control. These efforts must borrow from different disciplines and fall within the benchmarks of being, “healing, reconciling, and the restoration of confidence”.

John Gonsiorek, Ph.D. identified the complications not only of multiple clinical issues but also the conditions of ministerial culture and inherent liabilities of the priestly life in overcoming such issues of addiction and mental health problems.

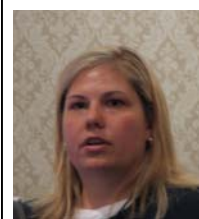
Rebecca Hafner –Fogarty, M.D. presentation explored the problems of those suffering with compulsive eating and the medical and social consequences and the recovery process.

Jeff Henrich, LADC and Carole (Nickey) Larson, Psy.D co-presented a seminar pertaining to the impact of gambling and online pornography on community life, concerns that are growing with identification and revelations in both dioceses and religious communities and seminary life.

Rev. Gerard McGlone, S.J., Ph.D. presentation highlighted issues related to the sexual abuse crisis within the Church. He reviewed the necessary steps and conditions for leadership to move beyond the crises beginning with appropriate screening and testing of new candidates, continued review and evaluation, assessment, and continuing education and formation experiences, and a call for “heroic and principled behavior”.

Bro. Ignatius Perkins, O.P. pointed out how religious communities can actively participate in promoting the dignity and healing of the human person with addiction. He offered an excellent model policy for a congregation or diocese addressing addictions. His presentation will be included in the Guest House Review.

Christopher Ringwald spoke to the spirituality of the recovering individual, the community and the 12 steps and religion as a healing process.



Dr. Lynn Stasior, M.D.

Lynn Stasior, M.D. gave a holistic medical view of addiction addressing the mind, body, and spirit and spoke to the community aspects of prevention, healing, and recovery. She emphasized awareness, compassion, and change within the self and community regardless of the big picture to initiate healing.

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Guest House Institute Created to Further Assist the Church

Just as Guest House's treatment services have grown within the last decade, so too has its service to the Church's leadership in the area of education. Recently, in an effort to consolidate, focus and accelerate education efforts, the Guest House Inc. Board of Trustees created the Guest House Institute.

The mission of the Guest House Institute is to promote health and spiritual wellness of Catholics by providing educational services regarding alcoholism and other addictions, and by promoting and providing research in alcoholism and other addictions affecting the Catholic Church.

One of the reasons the Institute was created was the fact that clergy and religious are often "first responders" with individuals and families who are experiencing significant problems related to substance abuse, like alcoholism. In fact, research has shown that 94% of Catholic clergy recognize substance abuse as a major issue among their parishioners-- and almost 38% believe that alcohol abuse is involved in half or more of the family problems they confront!

The Guest House Institute is responding to the needs of the Catholic community by:

- Developing training and educational opportunities for Church hierarchy, clergy, religious and laity regarding addiction;
- Working with seminarians, universities and dioceses and religious institutions to facilitate on-going education and training for those who are studying for ministry;
- Engaging in research to help prevent addiction among those who minister, as well as providing professional intervention while improving treatment for impaired clergy and religious;
- Offering retreats, seminars, and family seminars for those impacted by addiction;
- Providing a resource for information, educational materials, curriculum development, both online and in printed materials, and audio-visuals;
- Providing confidential consultation to those in leadership and ministry who are dealing with potential or actual addiction concerns;
- Working with those in parish ministry to implement programs that address the needs of parishioners, becoming welcoming communities for those afflicted by addiction.

Today, we are involved in a great deal of activity, providing education to Church leadership and other interested groups about the realities of chemically-related addictions, such as alcoholism, and the realities of sobriety and recovery. Woven throughout presentations is the spiritual aspect related to addictions, sobriety and recovery and the sacramental nature of the body of Christ.



Michael Morton, Executive Director, presenting at St. Joseph's Seminary in Mangalore, India



Site of the Guest House Institute
Lake Orion, Michigan

We're on the Web
www.guesthouseinstitute.org

The Guest House Institute will be producing a semi annual electronic journal. *The Guest House Review* featuring articles from previous conference speakers and much, much more. First edition will be available February 2008. Be sure to check our website for more information.