

Chaplain's Message Lent 2021

"Holiness is not having a lot, not doing a lot, but loving a lot."

Covid 19 Update:

Dear Friends of CFFC,

During times of hardship and struggle the poor always suffer more than the rich. Innocent, poor, children suffer the most during wars and famine. It has been the same with the Covid19 pandemic as it has spread around the world. Dr. Simone wanted me to share with you that every effort has been made to keep the work of CFFC going during this pandemic. We have tried to ship one cargo container full of food and emergency supplies every day, Monday to Friday. Last year, 2020, we shipped 207 containers. Several international shipping ports were closed for short periods of time and cargo shipping schedules slowed slightly during the months of April and May 2020. The work of CFFC has continued. We pray that Jesus will continue to bless our work and all of our generous benefactors. Dr. Simone is working hard too, 6 days a week, at his medical clinic. As always, he and Joan donate almost all these earnings to CFFC.

Joan's Story

Controlling the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in social distancing protocols and stay at home orders. I sent an email to Dr. Simone a few weeks ago telling him about a young man, 35 years old, that I knew. My young friend was a chronic alcoholic and he had recently died. His alcoholism was made worse by the fact that he was isolated and not working because of the COVID-19 lockdown. He was totally out of control. I asked Dr. Simone to pray for my young friend and for his grieving family. What made my young friend's recovery difficult, in fact impossible, was that he and his family are atheists. They are from a formerly communist country in eastern Europe. They are beautiful, caring, people. They are wonderful, neighbors, and friends but they cannot comprehend that they have a God that loves them, a God that cares about them. This has closed their hearts to God's infinite healing grace. Canadian Mental health professionals have been telling us for months about the hidden and tragic impacts that the Covid19 pandemic has had on our families.

A few days after writing my email I was talking to Dr. Simone on the phone. He told me that both he and Joan had read my message. They were praying for my friend and for his family. Dr. Simone said that Joan was moved by my email and that she wanted to help. **Joan wanted to share her personal struggle** with alcohol, to help other people struggling with this terrible addiction. No family is immune. She also wants everyone to know that God is the only answer to our addictions. "Our hearts are restless until we find comfort and strength in God alone." This is Joan's story, in her own words:

Mother Angelica, [founder of EWTN], once said that "Holiness was not having a lot, not doing a lot, but loving a lot." Forty years ago, Joan and Andrew had a large and growing family. They had a beautiful big house, and all the comforts of life. Andrew's medical practice was growing, and they were busy doing and buying a lot of things. Unfortunately, Joan reflected, they were "not loving a lot."

Joan was becoming aware of a growing personal problem. "While we were not heavy drinkers, we did have wine and brandy in the house. We kept it an upper cupboard in the kitchen. The alcohol was kept high out of the reach of the kids." On occasion "I would take a quick drink from the closest bottle." To do this, she would have to take a chair from the dining room into the kitchen, climb up on it, reach into the cupboard, and quickly take a drink. She was starting to enjoy these "pleasant moments" more and more.

One day as Joan was doing her "little thing" standing on the chair, taking a quick drink, she had not noticed that her 5-year-old son, Matthew, had come trotting around the corner into the kitchen. He surprised her and asked, "What are you doing Mom?" Joan turned, answered him casually, bottle still in hand, "just cleaning the cupboard," she said. Off he ran. Joan said she stood on the chair speechless, "I had just lied to my son."

Joan believes that the Holy Spirit sent her son into the kitchen at that exact moment to teach her to smarten up. The Holy Spirit made her aware of her lies. Alcohol addiction runs in her family, as it does in many families. The alcoholic requires lies, deceit, and denial, in order to continue their destructive lifestyle. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Jesus offers us freedom from alcohol and other addictions. He gives us the grace we need to fight against it. While Joan and Andrew still have alcohol in their home, Joan has been blessed to not crave it or drink it. The fight against the temptation to drink is never over. She explained that there have even been three occasions in her life when she had the opportunity to receive the Blood of Christ at Holy Communion, but she did not do so. On these occasions, the desire for wine crept into her mind and she did not feel she should receive Jesus in this way. The devil is always at work, looking and preying, on our weaknesses. Jesus gives Joan the grace to be aware and to resist these spiritual temptations. We cannot do it alone. Alcoholism and other addictions cannot be overcome with "will power" using our own strength. The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous recognizes this fact. The 12 Steps of A.A. acknowledges that only God, Higher Power, can free us from the slavery and destruction of our addictions. Let us remember to pray for all people struggling with addictions especially during this Covid19 time. The isolation and loneliness make life very difficult for people struggling with addictions. The support and love that families can provide is limited at this time. I have been told that Covid19 protocols have led to the cancellation of A.A. Meetings. These meetings help thousands of people every day be honest and accountable for their actions. The cancellation of these meetings is making life very hard for addicts who need this support.

Let us also pray for people who do not know Jesus and His Church. My young friend, who recently died, was convinced that happiness could only be found in a bottle. He was in terrible denial right to the end. His family is left to pick up the pieces of their lives with guilt and pain. In founding this charity Joan and Andrew have been adamant that ***Jesus is our strength***. This is the motto of this charity. They insist that Jesus is the source and summit of everything that we do. It is Jesus stirring in our hearts that makes us want to share. It is seeing Jesus in the poor that keeps us going when we are discouraged and want to quit. We hope and pray also that those who receive our aid will realize that Jesus loves them. These gifts we share with them come from Jesus. May Canadian Food For Children always be an instrument of Christ's love.

Brian Finamore