

IN THE WORDS OF A HOLY FAMILY PARISHIONER

“Addiction - A Sister’s Story” By Linda Trent

My sister Beth physically lost her battle with alcohol on December 21, 2012, but I tell people that I lost my sister to alcoholism more than two years before that, when her battle became too much for her to overcome. As her addiction deepened, I did not recognize the person she had become; with each new issue or illness she developed, I saw the beautiful woman I knew slip away.

Until my family was directly affected by Beth’s alcoholism, I never realized that loving someone with an addiction is like riding a wild rollercoaster. Each low point, when drunkenness came, was full of fear and trepidation; each high point, when sobriety came, was like a rush of exuberant energy and joy.

Addiction is a very selfish disease; it does not like to share. The addict feels they are the only one that feels the effect of the drug, when in fact the addiction affects everyone and everything in the path of the addict. I loved my sister and was very frustrated because she was choosing alcohol over her family. Even now, after years of loving an addict, I continue to struggle with the concept of how powerful and seductive these drugs can be or how one can choose them over their family and children.

When you love an addict, your life revolves around them. Each time my sister chose alcohol over her family, my life and the lives of my parents and her son came to a complete stop because we had to pick up the pieces of her life, put them back together and hope for the best. I used to question and blame myself for her addiction, asking if I could have prevented it. Should I

have been more supportive and encouraging? I wondered what I did wrong and how could I fix her. When you love someone so deeply and completely, you want the best for them. You want to do everything you can to pull them out of their addiction. It is difficult to come to terms with the fact that they are the only ones who can save themselves. It is even harder to understand that they are not “choosing” to ignore or hurt their loved ones, but it is the hold of addiction that forces them to do so. I know now that there was nothing I did or did not do that caused Beth’s struggles and that nothing I did could stop them, but that insight came later after much prayer, support and study of addiction.

Beth’s struggle began to have an impact on my mental, physical and spiritual health. In seeking help for her, I found help for myself. I took refuge in the Serenity Prayer and my church community.

A priest recommended that I read the Book of Job, which gave me strength by reminding me to let go of her issues and mine and to give them to GOD. I found myself drawn to the practice of yoga and meditation, which helped me calm the emotional turmoil that began to draw a cloud over my life. Through these practices I found a way to connect to my inner spirit and to be more mindful of my reactions to the world around me.

I grieve for the life my sister could have had and the life she was meant to

have. I still don’t understand the power alcohol had over her and probably never will. It will be a life-long process. My family continues to deal with the effects of her addiction which include anxiety trust issues. We are all learning to care for our own needs, a skill which was pushed aside so many years ago when it became necessary to focus on my sister’s needs, and more importantly, the needs of her son. Personally, I have continued the spiritual and physical practices that brought calm to me when my sister’s addiction was at its worst. I’m a member of Drug Free Communities of Fond du Lac County, an organization that works to prevent and reduce underage drinking, binge drinking and the misuse and abuse of prescription medication. I am also a part of Holy Family’s Addiction Ministry, which works to create awareness of the effects of drugs and alcohol on our community.

Addiction is a physical disease. No one can fix or heal the addict but themselves. However, those who have an addict in their lives can find help for their own difficulties. If you are affected by addiction or alcoholism in a loved one, there are many places to go for assistance. Holy Family Addiction Ministry has created a list of organizations that are here to help you to re-establish healthy boundaries and reclaim your emotions and physical health. The list can be found below, in the back of our churches or our website at http://hffdl.org/inner.iml?mdl=health_wellness.mdl. Contact our parish or one of our priests for spiritual guidance. An entire community stands ready to help. Above all, GOD is here to take care of you and your loved ones.

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.

Alcoholics Anonymous (hotline): 920-922-7512
Gratitude Club: 920-921-0143
Al-anon (for family members of someone with a drinking problem): use numbers above
Co-dependents Anonymous: 1-888-444-2359
Narcotics Anonymous: 1-800-240-0276
Nar-anon (for family members of someone with a drug problem): 1-800-477-6291

Gamblers Anonymous: 1-800-426-2535
Sex Addicts Anonymous (for persons with sexual compulsions and their family members): 1-800-477-8191

For other addictions, “let your fingers do your walking” and look for help in the yellow pages or on the Internet (just Google the addiction).