

From Darkness to Light...by Gerard

As a child I was very shy and quiet; as I got older I started to mix with others. I came from a good family, we went to mass every Sunday but I never understood what it was all about. At the age of 14 I had my first drink. I found my new friend at the start, it was great, and it helped me to be different. I loved this but as time went on it was to become my enemy, it nearly killed me. It brought me to places I never thought possible and became a living nightmare which progressed completely out of control. I cant find some of the words to describe it but here are a few; fear, torment, despair the rest are as follows.

From the start of my addiction, as I look back at the complete mess my life was in through the most difficult moments of my life, I have come to realise that all I wanted was to be loved; someone to say they cared about who I was and not to be ignored or put aside or put last. I wanted only to be loved through all the pain. As my addiction progressed I caused a lot of trouble for my family and relations through feeding my addiction. All I wanted was someone to notice me as a person but no one did.

In all this mess it was worse because my family despised me even more because of all the embarrassment I caused them through all the stealing, drinking, and chaotic lifestyle. As time went on I was full of fear and anger. I was sick of all the beatings and kickings I got from the street. I just didn't want to live anymore. I hated life. Nothing made sense. In all this, I would cry myself to sleep most nights. In the end I hated myself so bad I started taking overdoses, and cutting myself. I had it with life. On many occasions I tried to take my own life, I just didn't understand or see how to live life normally. I was numb to the core; how can there be so much pain and fear and darkness in life I used to think to myself.

Then I started searching, thinking to myself, there has to be more than all this. I still had hope. I went down many wrong roads to find the meaning to my life and how I could find peace. These roads took me to the occult, tarot cards, fortune tellers, mediums and to other religions which were all empty and had no meaning whatsoever, if anything they made me even worse.

I was more messed up then. I hit breaking point; I was rock bottom and everything seemed to collapse all around me.

When I had my own flat in Northern Ireland I had a breakdown. I completely lost it and totally trashed my flat. I was lying there in the flat in a pool of blood; I woke up in hospital where I spent a few weeks and then I was transferred to the Tyrone and Fermanagh Addiction unit in Omagh. I escaped after a few months then I got a bad kicking from the street and was back in hospital again with head injuries and broken ribs. After about a month, I was released and went home to my parents. A few weeks later I got in trouble with the police and was locked up in prison for a few weeks. After I left prison I moved to England to somehow try and sort my life out. I was still drinking and getting beaten up. Then one night, I left the pub drunk, yet again, and I went to the Catholic Cathedral in Northampton, it was pouring down with rain. I got down on my knees outside the church and I prayed and I said, "please God if you are there please, please help me, I am lost, I cant go on like this I need your help." A week later I met a guy called Martyn who was involved with youth2000. I started

going to the youth2000 prayer group. A few weeks later I went on a retreat with youth2000; this is when my life would start to change for the better.

At the retreat I was advised to go to confession. I remember I was very nervous, I told the priest it was a long time since my confession, 15years, he said “don’t worry I will help you”, so I told the priest everything I had done and said I was really sorry that I offended God and everyone who I wronged. Then the priest gave me absolution and said “God has now forgiven you, go in the peace of Christ Jesus.” I was given my penance, so I went next door where the most Blessed Sacrament was exposed and I fell to my knees as soon as I entered the room and I gazed in awe. I truly believed from my heart and soul that Jesus was there before me and that I was completely forgiven. The tears came in floods like a river; there was an almighty wind that went through me into my heart. My heart was on fire with the most amazing peace and love I have never felt before. It was like I was in heaven and I could never explain how it was but I will never ever forget it.

I truly believe that night in the pouring rain at the church that God heard my cry. He always hears the prayer of the lost, from the darkness to the light. *Amazing grace, how great thy sound that saved a wretch like me*, my life was now changing dramatically. My faith had increased!

It wasn’t until 2001, after entering *Communita Cenacolo* that I stopped drinking. I was there a short time, seven months. I’ve now been clean seven and half years and my life is so much better now. I believed that God would help me change my life. I got my own place, a full time job, everything was going great, I was going to church saying my prayers, and then I lost my job and my flat.

I was in a rut but I continued to pray and trust in God and that’s when I heard about **Grá House** in Ireland from a friend.

In June 2008, I came to **Grá House** and I am still here doing good with the help of **Grá House**. I feel this is my home; I am starting a course soon doing computers. Every one at Grá is helping me; they are my true friends and helping me and supporting me back into society. This house is a blessing! Each day I give thanks to God for everything in my life and mother Mary for continuing to guide me. I thank every one who supports **Grá House** and helps in anyway and as I look back at my life I have come to realise that it is only through God that you can be truly happy. If you continue to pray each day and have hope and trust in God then you will never really go wrong. When I surround myself with good and true friends, who support and encourage me, every thing else will be fine.

I go to Mass most days of the week and pray the holy rosary. I feel strong and I totally trust in the holy catholic faith. I have found my true treasure, my faith. I can’t do anything with my past or my future, but in the present moment, I take one day at a time and try to find a good balance in my life through prayer, study and living.

Pray, hope, and don’t worry! Saint Padre Pio, pray for us. Ask and you will receive, God bless us all, **Gerard**

Ps. my motto is never, never give up; try and try again. If you have Hope, you are nearly there, keep going! If you don’t know how, ask God. He will show you the way and he will bless you.