

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for He has visited and brought redemption to His people." -- Luke 1:68



## Your December Newsletter

### **Our Mission:**

to provide counseling which is faithful to the teachings, values, and traditions of the Catholic Church.

### **Our Primary Services:**

Evaluation and Treatment for mental illness, addictions, and spiritual distress.



### **Year End Reflections**

The mission of Gratia Plena is simply this: to do God's will, to serve the community, and to help build the kingdom of God on Earth...by providing mental health and spiritual direction services for those who seek help for mental illnesses, addictions, and spiritual distress. Our organization provides a unique resource in the community especially for those Catholics who might feel more comfortable talking with a Catholic therapist and/or spiritual director who is actively involved in the life of the Church and careful that all counseling guidance will be faithful to the teachings of the Church. We are approaching the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the launch of Gratia Plena. We have many blessings and challenges as a young, small organization.

Here's what happened this year at Gratia Plena. The number of staff expanded from three to seven and we provided nearly 2000 hours of services. We met with hundreds of individuals, couples, and families from a large number of different parishes...and did not turn one person away for lack of ability to pay. The number of donors also grew, and these kind hearts not only shared of their financial resources, but they gave us:

copy paper, coffee, notebooks, a new printer, Kleenex, paper cups, and a long list of other supplies that helped to defray our expenses. Also this year people started giving donations in memory of loved ones who have passed to eternal life: Fr. Jacques Weber, SJ, Sr. Damian Kuhn, CVI, Fr. TJ Martinez, SJ, and Dr. Ken's godson Timothy Barta.

We have forged and developed relationships with the University of St. Thomas, St. Mary's Seminary, and the Shalom Center. Cardinal DiNardo, Archbishop Fiorenza, Bishop Rizzotto and a long list of priests and deacons have encouraged us in our work, and we and are so overwhelmed by this, as it gives us strength to press on with our work. We hope they will keep praying for us. We do not know what the future will bring for Gratia Plena, but we focus on the work in front of us this day.

The Gratia Plena staff consider it a great blessing, privilege, and responsibility to be part of this mission. Again, we are particularly grateful for our courageous clients, for our generous donors, and for those who refer clients and donors to us with confidence and trust. In addition to your prayers for Gratia Plena, this newsletter contains several ways in which you can support our work and become part of this mission with us. Thank you in advance!



Shop on Amazon and .5% of your purchase can be donated to Gratia Plena! Use the link below to register and get started:

<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/27-4695599>



Shop on Goodshop and search on Goodsearch and they will donate up to 20% of what you spend. Find thousands of coupons from Pottery Barn and Kohls. Use the link below to register and get started;

<http://www.goodsearch.com/?charityid=946060>

### **End of the Tax Year Giving**

Gratia Plena went through the laborious task of becoming qualified as an IRS recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization. This means that your donations are tax deductible according to the law. Each year Gratia Plena's expenses have matched our income. Twice in 2014 we have had to begin a waiting list for clients seeking help, referring many clients to other Catholic counselors in the area. We hate having people on a wait list. Our goal is to be able to schedule an intake assessment within a day or two from a prospective client's first contact with us. Help us be able to continue to provide high quality service to the community. We have had requests to expand and open other office locations, but

finances hold us back from this. If you are unable to assist, please send some donors our way who might wish to help.

### **Seasonal Affective Disorder**

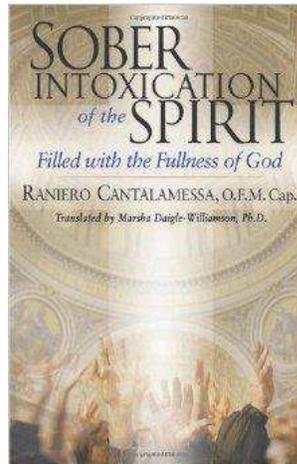
As native Houstonians, Dr. Ken and his wife remember living through five long winter seasons in the Chicagoland area. They recall the dreary overcast skies nearly every day for what seemed like months, and would remark “how depressing this weather is.” A type of mood disorder that seemed to correspond to the late Fall and early Winter seasons was identified in the 1980s and called “Seasonal Affective Disorder” or “SAD” for short. In this pattern, people may experience symptoms such as excessive sleep, carbohydrate craving, lack of energy, and other common signs of Depression. While the name of this disorder has changed in the most recent update of the technical psychiatric diagnostic manual, the disorder is still believed to exist and is commonly recognized and treated sometimes with light therapy, sometimes counseling, sometimes with medication, and sometimes with a combination of these approaches. [You can read more about this by following this link.](#)



### **Holiday Blues**

The holidays can be a time which stir up many pleasant feelings, but loneliness can also appear. Those who are grieving the loss of a loved one may feel a renewed sense of sadness. We see an increase of drinking during this season, as well as greater numbers frequenting adult bookstores and strip clubs and using porn. Families may get together for this

special time, and old conflicts can be stirred up again (sometimes fueled by alcohol). Be aware of these issues in advance, and let's think ahead of how we might go into this season with a different heart: a spirit of compassion, forgiveness, understanding, kindness, patience, and selflessness. Invite someone who might be lonely to join you for dinner. Invite a neighbor to Mass. Bring the peace and joy of the Infant Christ into someone's life during this most holy season.



**Book of the Month Recommendation:**

This month we recommend the book "[Sober Intoxication of the Spirit](#)" by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM, who is an Italian priest. He holds the position of "Preacher to the Papal Household," the only person who can give homilies to the pope. He was hired by Pope St. John Paul II in 1980, then retained by Pope Benedict XVI and now also by Pope Francis. If you are not so much into reading, Fr. Mark Goring of the [Catholic Charismatic Center](#) in Houston has been reviewing the book in a series of 2-3 minute [videos on YouTube](#). These videos are great and so is the Charismatic Center! In next month's newsletter, watch for our "Movie of the Month" recommendation.

*Disclaimer: Gratia Plena and its staff do not receive any compensation or earthly benefits from recommending books, movies, music, websites, blogs, apps, et cetera...*

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