As an adult convert to Catholicism, my walk of faith received a huge jumpstart in 2000 when, at the age of 33, I received the Sacraments of Penance, Confirmation and first Holy Eucharist. For the first couple of years as a new Catholic, I would often cry after I received Communion, tears of relief and gladness at the nearly inexpressible Mercy of God our Redeemer (I still tear up…but in those days, the water works were really something…).

"I have seen the Lord!" Mary Magdalene is telling us now in Eastertide. We adult converts, especially those of us who were the most strayed of the strayed sheep, often feel this and say this for many years after we are reconciled to Mother Church. I would go so far as to say that I am only here on earth as a pilgrim to proclaim this, and only this, to those I love and those God puts in my path.

"I have seen the Lord!"

Mary also seems to say, "And I will never be the same, nor do I want to go back to the disorder, chaos and darkness of my former life. I am new. I am loved. I want to love everybody as I have been loved."

Right now, in this moment of our renewal, we are reflecting on how unique is conversion, how the journey of faith is unrepeatable and deeply personal. I was recently sitting on a bench in the narthex of our parish church having a wonderful conversation with a young woman, Jennifer, about our prayer commitments. She is a Consecrated member of Regnum Christi, so she lights up like a lamp when prayer is the topic of conversation.

Time for prayer

As a married woman with grown and growing children, it seems odd to be consumed with when to pray, how to pray, is there enough prayer going on for me daily, weekly, monthly, yearly? How can I involve the family, as I am the heart of my home? How do I meet them respectfully where they are on their individual walks of faith? Should I not be at Kroger and CVS picking up the family shopping? Should I not be walking the dog and

folding the towels, answering emails from the various schools our kiddos attend and planning and cooking our meals? Should I not be booking vacations and dental appointments, not retreats?

What's this prayer commitment thing anyway?

In my case, I moved both into the Movement and into the second degree largely as affirmations of the desires already in my heart. Both my incorporations were validations of where I already was spiritually—wait, a bit more than that…they were moments of commissioning as well. What I mean to say is that we ought to go forth in the confidence that God has called, strengthens the called and asks us to be instruments to call others. This takes spiritual body building. This spiritual work is regular and varied, not random and complex. It is tiring and joyful, hard work and ease. Prayer is the primary apostolate of an apostle.

As Catholics, we all know that the "Lord heals as He will." Yes, this is true, but you can bet your bottom dollar (…your last buck…) that He unloads the graces on those who have asked Him to do so. Our job as Regnum Christi members is to help others ask the Lord for His help. This has happened to me so often. I am so often in need. Over and over again, it is through the kind assistance of a friend, one who understands the power of intercessory prayer, that those tender mercies and graces and blessings not only wash and heal my sin-sick soul, but also work small wonders in the life of my family and friends.

Maybe we further ponder the way Christ's Quiet Heart prays in us in all times and circumstances by thinking about the lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Nazareth. Nazareth was often noisy, full of banging pots and tools, animals, shouts of joy and laughter; and, let's not forget, there was sadness and frustration, squabbles with relatives and strangers—all of this I am sure. There was sickness. There was health. There was rest and food and water and prayer, lots of prayer, for any and every circumstance. "Hear, oh Israel…" So many good Jews had their spiritual eyes and ears open to God's workings in their daily lives.

All of this is Christ's Quiet Heart, a Heart completely unattached to selfish desires and motives. The quiet and solitude we are looking for in prayer does not wait for a lack of noise, a lack of painful circumstances or a lack of bursting, bubbling life. We ask for the quiet of real prayer with regular discipline, just like an athlete who has a program of exercise, hydration, rest and good nutrition. We alternate the prayers with the duties and jobs and work. It is like playing music. The prayer is the strumming of the guitar accompanying the this, the that and the other.

Prayer for time

Prayer commitments are also like needle craft. We poke our fingers at times on the needle. We have to pull out the bad stitches and start afresh. Other times, the needles fly and the sock gets made so fast, so perfect and the pattern is intact. Sometimes even a hand-knit pair turns out perfectly. Other time, we get one so nice and pretty, while the other is a big, fat dud.

These prayer commitments are like cooking or catering, or doing the work of an engineer or an accountant. They entail planning, preparation, and execution. Mostly, they involve dedicated individuals being diligent within their particular families and communities. If we are praying regularly, well, let's praise God that it is because we are never alone. Our Lord loves us to go to Him just as we are, hopefully, like Mary bringing it all to Him.

Then, as He asks us all to do, we let go of Him to go tell others the great and good mercies He has given. These others in our lives are given as gifts too. God gives us loved ones and friends. He gives us enemies too…all persons are brought to us for our benefit, all to put us in prayer, so that we may constantly be begging mercies and graces and blessings. In Regnum Christi, we know the liturgical prayer contains the Source and Summit of our Faith. We also explore and explain to others the many and varied means of prayer. Prayer is the gasoline of the apostle. We pray at all times. We should look to the world, at times, a bit "obsessed" by prayer.

Oh, it is noon…shutting off my word processor to pray the Angelus, with love, your sister in Christ, Sara