

Reflections

Volume 39

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St. Paul Ministry

November 2018

We All Have A Past

Help from Drug and Alcoholism

The Church In Crisis...St John Bosco's Dream

Blessings to All:

The life of sin in our past, should stay in the past. And not be a weight we carry around our shoulders for the rest of our lives. Forgiveness and new life are offered to us by a Personal God.

What do I mean by Personal God?

God wants to be a part of your life now and forever. God does not want to abandon us to the unholiness of Satan and eternal destruction. He offers us His Son to invite us back into the family.

Through the eternal forgiveness of our past sins and any future sins, we have Jesus Christ as mediator and friend. He is our brother and extends His open arms to us to come and get a hug and to seek forgiveness.

We are a part of the family of God who has prepared a heavenly place for us. A place of love, peace and security. Paradise awaits the children of God. He is a Personal God and loves us very much. Come back to Him if you have been away. He will accept your request for forgiveness. He is a loving Father that holds no grudges for your Past.

I know that we all have a Past. So, what! God already knows that too! But He loves us and is eager to hear from us and gives us courage and faith in Him and His son, Jesus Christ.

Life is a combination of success and failure. Our soul may be marked up with injuries from our Past that we seemed to resurrect from time to time. This is being human, and regret is a normal feeling we have, when we remember things we are not proud of. But don't linger on them and let them have a life. You can be assured of a Personal God giving you what is needed to move beyond your Past and into a

New You. Regrets are fine. But peace of soul is greater and will bring you into a new area of happiness when you confront your Past and give you Past to Jesus.

Jesus took our past sins and future sins onto the Cross and made the perfect offering for sins for all times. Reach out to our Personal God. You are loved and are a part of His family. You're in good company with Saints who also had a Past.

St Augustine-the pleasure seeker; Saint Magdalene-the prostitute; St Dismas-the good thief; and many, many more who were great sinners became saints.

The whole world is filled with sinners with a Past. But God does not give up on us.

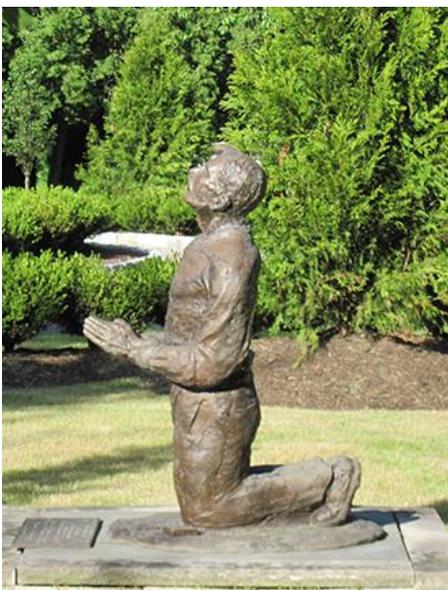
What does it take to be a Saint? Here is a simple definition... **any believer who is "in Christ" and in whom Christ dwells, whether in Heaven or on Earth.**

Let us give our Past to Christ. Do that and He will dwell in us and we in Him. And then go out and be examples of goodness to all those you meet who struggle with their Past. Tell them about the forgiveness found in Jesus Christ. Be a witness to others by your language; your life; your love of family; and your forgiveness of others who have offended you in some way, no matter how many years ago it happened or if it just happened today.

Venerable Matt Talbot

A patron saint for those suffering from alcoholism

The name of Matt Talbot is not well known outside of Ireland, but Talbot will likely be canonized in the not-too-distant future and become the patron saint of alcoholics. He was declared Venerable by Pope Paul VI in 1975.



Matt Talbot was born in humble circumstances in Dublin in May 1856. At that time, Ireland was recovering from the devastating famine of the mid-1840s. This was an era of grinding poverty and appalling living conditions, especially in the larger cities.

Heavy drinking and alcoholism were very severe problems in those years, and a deep-seated feature of Dublin life. Talbot's father and older brothers were heavy drinkers. Alcohol provided one of the few means of escape from the harsh conditions of Dublin life, and it brought with it all the miseries of broken

families and unfulfilled hopes.

From his early years up to the age of twenty-four, Matt Talbot was a very heavy drinker, and clearly an alcoholic. This was a source of great distress to his mother. His pay check each week went primarily for alcohol. He frequented pubs every night, and when he ran out of money, he borrowed and scrounged among his fellow drinkers. To sustain his habit, he pawned his clothes and boots to get money for alcohol. On one occasion, he stole a violin from a street musician and sold it to buy drink. Most of his jobs in that early period were deliberately with liquor merchants, where he had easy access to alcohol.

In 1884, however, Talbot stopped drinking and made a three-month pledge to refrain from alcohol. Having been successful in that attempt, he made a year-long and then a life-long pledge. Despite great temptations, he never took a drink again. For the rest of his life, however, abstinence was for him a fierce spiritual and psychological struggle.

The remaining forty-one years were lived heroically with Matt attending daily Mass, praying fervently, helping the poor, and living out a strict spiritual life. He modeled himself on the early Irish monks, whose lives were extremely severe. He constantly read scripture, the lives of the saints, the writings of St. Francis de Sales, and works like the Confessions of St. Augustine. His spiritual director was a priest at the diocesan seminary, who gave him a chain to wear permanently around his waist as a sign of penance.

Talbot dropped dead of a heart attack on a Dublin street on Trinity Sunday, June 7, 1925 on his way to Mass, and he was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery.

News of Talbot's death, of his severe penitential life, the discovery of the chains he wore, and, not least, his triumph over alcohol spread rapidly among Dublin Catholics. He was popularly hailed as a saint.

Within a few years of his death, Matt was regarded as a patron and protector of those suffering from alcoholism. In 1972, his remains were exhumed and brought to Our Lady of Lourdes Church, in the area where Matt had spent his life. Every day pilgrims came to pray at his tomb, and organized pilgrimages from all over Ireland became frequent.

Since then, devotion to Talbot has spread among alcoholics and their families beyond Ireland, and many devotees look forward to his canonization.

Not a lot has been published about Matt Talbot. Two of the books I would recommend are: *Eddie Doherty, Matt Talbot* (Combermere, Ontario: Madonna

House Publications, 2001); and Tom Ryan, *Comfort My People: Prayers and Reflections Inspired by the Venerable Matt Talbot* (Dublin: Veritas, 2001).

Article by Msgr. Mannion is pastor emeritus of St. Vincent de Paul parish in Salt Lake City.

Matt Talbot Retreats For Recovery

Loyola Jesuit Center offers recovery retreats for men and for women. Matt Talbot retreats are an opportunity for recovering alcoholics and addicts to enhance their spirituality and sober way of life in a setting that promotes fellowship and sharing throughout the weekend. Retreats are based upon the spirituality of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and the 12-step program. Our Retreat Directors are usually both a recovering alcoholic and members of the clergy who bring valuable insights into the spiritual element of the disease of alcoholism. A recovery retreat weekend includes: daily Mass, Reconciliation, Adoration, conferences, discussion group break-out sessions and AA meetings. These retreats have proven extremely beneficial to the recovery and healing process as is shown by the frequent return of many retreatants. All faiths are welcome. Please call our office at (973) 539-0740 if you require financial assistance or need flexible funding at this time. No one is ever turned away for lack of funds.

In addition to Matt Talbot #1, other Matt Talbot groups are scheduled throughout the year. Please call [\(973\) 539-0740](tel:9735390740) or email retreathouse@loyola.org for more information.

January 4 – 6, 2019 – MATT TALBOT #1 MEN'S WEEKEND RETREAT – Recovery Retreat

Retreat begins on Friday evening with dinner at 7:15pm and ends on Sunday after Mass and lunch around 1:00pm.

July 26 – 28, 2019 – MATT TALBOT #1 MEN'S WEEKEND RETREAT – Recovery Retreat

Retreat begins on Friday evening with dinner at 7:15pm and ends on Sunday after Mass and lunch around 1:00pm.

A Matt Talbot weekend retreat brings together recovering alcoholics/addicts in a setting that promotes prayer, reflection and the sharing of one's experience, strength and hope with others in recovery. Includes: daily Mass, Reconciliation, Adoration, conferences, discussion group break-out sessions and AA meetings.

The Twin Pillars of Victory

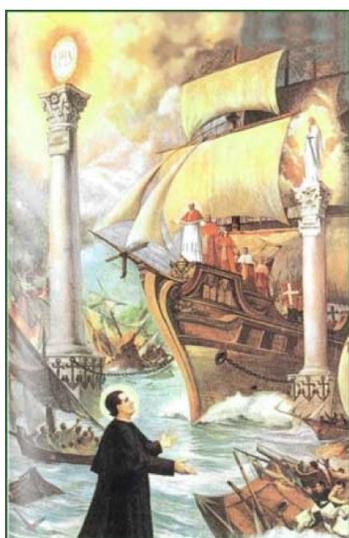
The Church in Crisis



In May of 1862 St. John Bosco had a prophetic dream about the Church in these times: the battle and the victory. St. John Bosco had a great affection for Our Lady. His whole life was spent working for the glory of God and the salvation of souls with the aid of the Blessed Mother, whom he addressed as Mary Help of Christians. He had an unusual charism of the Holy Spirit and that was the gift of prophetic dreams. The following is the prophetic dream of May 1862 taken from a book, entitled **Forty Dreams of St. John Bosco**, compiled by Fr. J. Bacchiarello, S.D.B.

St. John Bosco Describes His Dream

"Imagine yourselves to be with me on the seashore, or better, on an isolated rock and not to see any patch of land other than what is under your feet. On the whole of that vast sheet of water you see an innumerable fleet of ships in battle array. The prows of the ships are formed into sharp, spearlike points so that wherever they are thrust they pierce and completely destroy. These ships are armed with cannons, with lots of rifles, with incendiary materials, with other arms of all kinds, and also with books, and they advance against a ship very much bigger and higher than themselves and try to dash against it with the prows or to burn it or in some way to do it every possible harm.



"As escorts to that majestic fully equipped ship (the Church), there are many smaller ships, which receive commands by signal from it and carry out movements to defend themselves from the opposing fleet.

"In the midst of the immense expanse of sea, two mighty columns of great height arise a little distance the one from the other. On the top of one, there is the statue of the Immaculate Virgin, from whose feet hangs a large placard with this inscription: **Auxilium Christianorum - 'Help of Christians'**; on the other, which is much higher and bigger, stands a Host of great size proportionate to the column and

beneath is another placard with the words: ***Salus Credentium - 'Salvation of the Faithful.'***

"The supreme commander on the big ship is the Sovereign Pontiff. He, on seeing the fury of the enemies and the evils among which his faithful find themselves, determines to summon around himself the captains of the smaller ships to hold a council and decide on what is to be done.

"All the captains come aboard and gather around the Pope. They hold a meeting (probably the First Vatican Council: 1869-1870), but meanwhile the wind and the waves gather in storm, so they are sent back to control their own ships. There comes a short lull; for a second time the Pope gathers the captains together around him (probably the Second Vatican Council: 1962-1965), while the flagship goes on its course. But the frightful storm returns. The Pope stands at the helm and all his energies are directed to steering the ship towards those two columns, from the top of which and from every side of which are hanging numerous anchors and big hooks, fastened to chains.

"All the enemy ships move to attack it, and they try in every way to stop it and to sink it: some with writings or books or inflammable materials, of which they are full; others with guns, with rifles and with rams. The battle rages ever more relentlessly. The enemy prows thrust violently, but their efforts and impact prove useless. They make attempts in vain and waste all their labor and ammunition; the big ship goes safely and smoothly on its way. Sometimes it happens that, struck by formidable blows, it gets large, deep gaps in its sides; but no sooner is the harm done than a gentle breeze blows from the two columns and the cracks close up and the gaps are stopped immediately.

"Meanwhile, the guns of the assailants are blown up, the rifles and other arms and prows are broken; many ships are shattered and sink into the sea. Then, the frenzied enemies strive to fight hand to hand, with fists, with blows, with blasphemy and with curses.

"All at once the Pope falls gravely wounded. Immediately, those who are with him run to help him and they lift him up. A second time the Pope is struck, he falls again and dies. A shout of victory and of joy rings out amongst the enemies; from their ships an unspeakable mockery arises. (Possibly refers to Pope John Paul I who was deeply devoted to Fatima and died under suspicious circumstances.)

"But hardly is the Pontiff dead than another Pope takes his place. The pilots, having met together, have elected the Pope so promptly that the news of the death of the Pope coincides with the news of the election of the successor. The adversaries begin to lose courage.

"The new Pope, putting the enemy to rout and overcoming every obstacle, guides the ship right up to the two columns and comes to rest between them; he makes it fast with a light chain that hangs from the bow to an anchor of the column on which stands the Host; and with another light chain which hangs from the stern, he fastens it at the opposite end to another anchor hanging from the column on which stands the Immaculate Virgin.

"Then a great convulsion takes place. All the ships that until then had fought against the Pope's ship are scattered; they flee away, collide and break to pieces one against another. Some sink and try to sink others. Several small ships that had fought gallantly for the Pope race to be the first to bind themselves to those two columns.

"Many other ships, having retreated through fear of the battle, cautiously watch from far away; the wrecks of the broken ships having been scattered in the whirlpools of the sea, they in their turn sail in good earnest to those two columns, and, having reached them, they make themselves fast to the hooks hanging down from them and there they remain safe, together with the principal ship, on which is the Pope. Over the sea there reigns a great calm."

St. John Bosco explains his dream: "The enemy ships are persecutions. The most serious trials for the Church are near at hand...Her enemies are represented by the ships that tried to sink the ship if they could. Only two means are left to save her amidst so much confusion: **DEVOTION TO MARY MOST HOLY and FREQUENT COMMUNION**, making use of every means and doing our best to practice them and having them practiced everywhere and by everybody."



Reflections Newsletter is published each month, free of charge. If you want to be on the mailing list, please send your request to r44pick@aol.com.

See our New Web Site at www.catholicfamilynewsletter.com

Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to be Christian examples in their work, home and with others, for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.

Masses at St Lukes at the Vintage: Tuesday 11am; & Friday @ Noon

Mass at Methodist Willowbrook: Wednesday @ Noon.

St. Paul Ministry, Cypress, TX

