Venerable Matt Talbot

“My God, my great God, my Life, my Love, my Glory.”

Matt Talbot was born May 1856 in Dublin Ireland.

He was one of twelve children, six of whom lived to adulthood.

His father was a heavy drinker and, as a result, the family grew up in poverty.

As school wasn’t compulsory Matt only attended for one year.

He struggled to learn to read and write and began work at the age of 12 in a factory that bottled beer.

It wasn’t a good place for Matt to work - he began drinking at a very young age.

By the time he was in his twenties, Matt spent all his wages and spare time in a local pub. All he was interested in was drink.

He was looked down on by those in the community.

We know now that he had become an alcoholic. There was very little understanding back then that alcoholism is an illness.

When he had spent all his wages, he borrowed and begged for money.

He pawned his clothes and boots.
He became a thief, once stealing a fiddle from a blind man.

His life became very very difficult.

Then something happened which changed Matt’s life.

Matt, even though he was a heavy drinker, always shared his money with his friends and thought they would do the same for him.

But one Saturday morning in 1884, he waited outside the local pub without a penny in his pocket and his friends all walked by and ignored him.

He couldn’t believe it but it was a moment of ‘grace’ from God. He walked home slowly realising he was totally addicted to drink and it was destroying his life.

In Ireland then it was common for someone who wished to stop drinking to take a solemn pledge before a priest to abstain for a period of time.

Mrs. Talbot could not believe her eyes when Matt came home sober and said "Ma, I'm going to take the pledge for life,"

The priest persuaded him that he should take the pledge for ninety days only and the three months that followed were extremely hard for Matt.

Matt used to go for walks to fill the time he used to spend drinking.

One evening he walked into another pub. The barman was so busy with others he didn’t even notice Matt.

The priest persuaded him that he should take the pledge for ninety days only and the three months that followed were extremely hard for Matt.

Matt used to go for walks to fill the time he used to spend drinking.

One evening he walked into another pub. The barman was so busy with others he didn’t even notice Matt. Matt felt humiliated again. He walked out and went straight to a Church.

Matt made a promise that evening that he kept for the whole of his life. He wouldn’t carry money with him and dropping into a Church to rest during his walks became a habit.

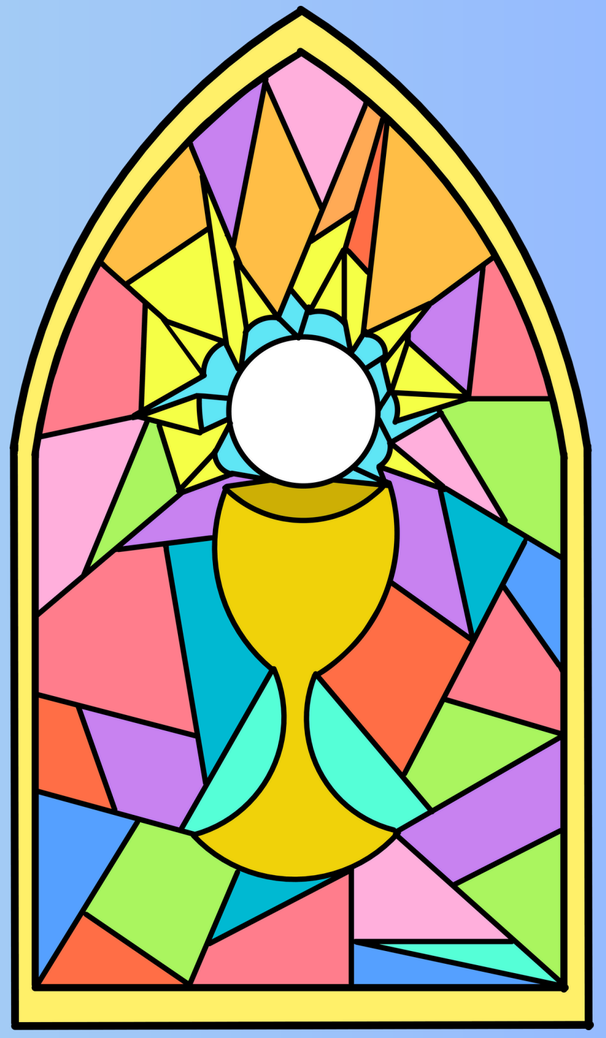
Slowly, he began to pray, to ask God to help him.
To find the strength to remain sober he decided to attend Mass every morning before work and to receive Holy Communion.

At the end of three months, Matt took the pledge to abstain from alcohol for six months and finally took it for life.

Matt also made sacrifices to help him to remain sober. He woke early in the morning after only 5 or 6 hours of sleep and went to Mass.

He became a great worker in the lumberyard of T. & C. Martin. Many years later, one of his former foremen described him as *"the best worker in Dublin"*

He had learned to read and write and was quite ready to discuss the rights of workers so they could have better working conditions.



Matt went to meetings in the evenings to know more about Jesus and how to help others.

When he came home about 9 p.m. or 10 p.m he read more about his faith to bring him closer to God and to know God’s plan for his life.

He did not go to work on Sunday but went to one of the City Churches and would kneel in an there from the first Mass at 6 a.m. until mid-day.

Matt didn’t boast to anyone about what he was doing, the way he was now living his life.

He was very generous to those in need - many people were very poor in Dublin at that time.

Matt Talbot died suddenly in Granby Lane on the way to Mass on Sunday, June 7th, 1925.

On his body after his death it was found he wore three chains around his body to show his total devotion Mary, our Mother.

In 1972 his remains were removed to a tomb in Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Sean McDermott Street.

In 1975 the Holy See, the Vatican gave him the title "Venerable" which is a step on the road to his being canonised as a saint.

DERRY DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL CENTRE

The Gate Lodge, 2 Francis Street, Derry, BT48 7DS

Tel: +4428 71264087 Email ddcc@derrydiocese.org

www.catecheticalcentre.org www.jp2award.com

#catecheticalcentre