

Inspiration from Ephesians

“You did not so learn Christ! — assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. Put off the old man that belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (4:20–24).

For all trying to help an addict admit he or she might have a problem, it still is important to remember, as mentioned previously, the Church is one body, and as such we have access to Jesus, the divine physician. He wants to heal us and make us whole — and will never stop loving us. He has given us resources within the Church to draw from, such as our priests and the sacraments.

The graces that come from the healing Sacrament of Reconciliation, coupled with the power of the Eucharist, are great free (both literally and spiritually) resources to help strengthen the soul on this journey. Do not hesitate to call the local parish or diocese to see if they offer faith-based support groups (many do). And if, unfortunately, the answer is no, you can turn to the larger Catholic community online where there are several national Catholic ministries who specialize in addictions — for example, catholicinrecovery.com, cleanheart.online for porn, etc.

Be Not Afraid (nor Discouraged)

Recovery for the addict or the family is a journey, and just as it was with Jesus’ disciples, it will not always be an easy journey. The addict must remember that addiction, while familiar, is also not an easy path. Never lie to an active user by telling him or her that if they quit they will “feel” better,



because the truth is, initially they will not. In fact, it is likely they will feel worse. But the peace and serenity that comes with recovery and from walking in faith is always worth it.

Having hope is a great attribute of the Faith. But sometimes our struggles combat our hopes. If you are a family member of an addict who is not yet open to receiving healing, seek help for yourself. Talk to someone, a priest, therapist, support group, etc. And as you continue to pray, remember that God desires to be with your loved one far more than you desire for them to be with God. Hold on to the cross and trust in the Lord.

Serenity Prayer

By Reinhold Niebuhr

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time,
accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.
Taking, as he did, this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it,
trusting that he will make all things right
if I surrender to his will,
that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
and supremely happy with him forever in the next.
Amen.

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Battling ADDICTION

with the Help of Your Faith



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*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.”*

— PROVERBS 3:5-6

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Jesus teaches us that in order to inherit the kingdom of God we must feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, be hospitable to strangers, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and those in prison (see Mt 25:35–36). The Catholic Church has done well to heed these directives and the evidence is present in the many Church organizations and ministries whose mission it is to help these populations. And that should happen, and sometimes does, when the help you or a loved one needs concerns the area of addictions, either from substances, such as alcohol or drugs, and/or behaviors, such as pornography, gambling, food, etc.

As the bride of Christ, we are one body, and when one of us suffers, we all suffer. Therefore, we are not alone, and the Church and the Faith can be a source of mercy and healing, even when the help needed is so stigmatized in today’s culture.

One Body

It is humbling, and a total act of surrender, to admit one has a problem, much less needing to ask for help. The truth is, very few families or addicts recover alone. Therefore, having a network of support, not just family and friends, but also from the

local/church community, is crucial for any person trying to overcome substance abuse, as well as for that person’s family members.

Often people of faith experience shame at the thought of having to tell someone they (or someone they love) is struggling with addiction. It does not help when you yourself tell friends or family about the struggle and they suggest you “just pray to God,” which actually often implies you are not already doing so. Further, if you have been praying and the struggle continues, you may feel even more shame, thinking, “I must not be praying hard enough.” As well-meaning as this suggestion is, it is important for all of us to remember that we are created mind, body, and soul.

Yes, God is a God of miracles and can deliver us from any suffering. However, it is important to note that substance abuse and addictive behaviors can alter the body and mind in a way that makes praying not enough. Addictions are rarely ever “prayed away,” but in fact generally require action.



What to Look For

First things first. For family members who suspect their loved one may have a substance- or behavior-use disorder, it can be frustrating not knowing where to turn when looking for help, or how to determine what might be going on. Many symptoms, such as irritability, moodiness, or a tendency to isolate, could be a strong indication of



PATRON SAINT

Venerable Matt Talbot (1856–1925), a Dublin, Ireland, native who was a heavy drinker and active alcoholic until age thirty, is considered a patron saint of alcoholics and can and should be prayed to for intercession for any addict. He was a laborer in the building trade.

When Talbot accepted that he needed to reform his ways, he took to constant prayer and avidly read Scripture and of the lives of the saints to fight the demons he was battling. In his quest, he became a Secular Franciscan and began an ascetical life that included fasting from meat nine months a year. He also generously donated to the missions.

substance abuse when a mild-use disorder. However, by the time a person has a severe substance or behavior-use disorder, the aforementioned symptoms are likely to be more obvious. In general, the amount of substances consumed will begin to increase; responsibilities at work or with family will begin to be neglected; individuals may put themselves in high risk situations, such as driving under the influence; and there is a good chance they will be unable to stop using for an extended period of time.

What can we Catholics, and the Church, do to help the suffering addict among us? What are some of the steps needed to make progress when that person suffering wants to quit, and what, as a family member or friend, can we do?

1. **Accept that there is a problem and that help is needed**
2. **Ask for help (if physically/psychologically dependent, seek professional help)**
3. **Find a support network**
4. **Immerse yourself in the sacraments**

