

## “Consider Abstaining from alcohol for Lent”

### The Challenge: **Abstain or Reduce Your Alcohol Use**

- ✦ **Charity (Almsgiving) : Save monies from challenge, consider giving to those in need**
- ✦ **Consider: Becoming involved in new activities**
- ✦ **It may well improve your Health & Wellbeing**
- ✦ **Promotes positive influence to Young People – Positive Message**
- ✦ **Personal Achievement can be so Rewarding – try the challenge**

“Although the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41)

If you or your group are now contemplating the challenge of reducing or abstaining from alcohol over the Lenten period between the “Ash & Shamrock”, here is some information that may help you examine your own drinking habits, behaviours and attitudes towards alcohol and then you may feel more informed in order to make a decision to reduce or abstain from alcohol for this short period of your life. Let us remember alcohol is ok and enjoyable for adults to use in moderation however we must remember.

*Alcohol is a drug, a drug which changes the way the body works, and it affects the mind, the body and emotions. Remember alcohol is a depressant- the more you drink you might become sleepy or drowsy or more emotional.*

We first have to commend the many adults who drink alcohol in moderation and the others who have chosen to remain abstinent from alcohol until they are 18 years old or others who abstain for life. We encourage people who may feel they have lost control of their lives to alcohol or if alcohol is causing any problem in their lives to seek professional help from HSE or local self help groups like A/Asupport groups in your area. Help and support contacts can be viewed at [www.drugs.ie](http://www.drugs.ie) We commend all the good work which is done all over the country by individuals, support groups and parishes in reaching out to those in need of support and care.

**First remember the recommended low risk weekly limits for an adult is (for a woman up to 14 standard drinks in a week) and (for a man up to 21 standard drinks in a week). However remember not in one setting but spaced out over a weekly period.**

**REMEMBER a STANDARD DRINK = ½ Pint of beer, one measure of spirit or small glass of wine. It then takes the body an hour to process this standard alcohol drink.**

# Adults considering Abstaining / Reducing Alcohol Consumption

Thank you for considering making a decision to abstain or reduce your alcohol consumption for the Lenten Period. **Below is a list of items that may help** you with your challenge or sacrifice. If you choose to abstain it may be easier to some or for others more difficult, however it may be much more rewarding as a personal challenge and sacrifice. If you choose to reduce your consumption, it is still be a very positive achievement for you or a group. Try to encourage others to make a group of 5/6 people to take up the challenge.

**Remember the task will be much easier having a group of family or friends to support each other refraining or reducing alcohol consumption**

- You can **support** each other by phone or meeting up for chats
- There may be times the group will miss a drink, however by **distracting yourself**, the urges will disappear or decrease
- You can **plan an alternative** for the times you most frequently go for a drink like, spend time to get healthy, take walks, go to cinema, leisure centre, attend the theatre, spend time together with family or friends
- All of group could agree to put monies into a kitty and donate to those in need or chosen **charity**
- Give some of your time to **voluntary work** to help your community be a better place.
- The group could agree to do a night course or consider setting a **goal to achieve** over Lent
- Agree to a **reward** the group when you achieve the task following the ending of the Lenten period
- As young people learn from adults behaviour, by taking this challenge, it sends out a **positive message to young people**

## **Some Positives of Abstaining from Alcohol for between Ash & Shamrock**

To fast or deny the body of something we enjoy can be a great sense of personal achievement while also a deeper spiritual achievement that can be used as a means of prayer

- **Savings – example: Couple out 2 nights out in Public House drinking 4 alcohol drinks each @ 5 euro each Saves €80 week and abstaining between ash and shamrock you could SAVE OVER 320 Euro in 4 weeks**

# Adults – Reducing Alcohol

**Responding to this challenge to alcohol may allow us to look at our vulnerability, and as humans and as members of God's Church we are in a community together. We are social beings, we need each other and we need to be sustained and nourished by a power greater than ourselves.**

Let us first remember more is not always better. Moderation is good news for health, relationships, for personal expenses and most importantly it is good for our human Spirit. It brings satisfaction and well-being.

Alcohol used wisely is enjoyed by many people and often is part of celebrations and family gatherings. However, in the last number of years we have heard so much about the extent of binge drinking in Ireland. Binge drinking is a term used to describe an occasion when we drink too much. It is when we have 6 or more standard drinks. Many of us know that binge drinking has existed for years. It just happened to take on a new name! Young people justifiably state that it is not just a pattern among young people but shaped by the example of the adult population. Research shows that clear messages from parents that underage drinking is unacceptable delays drinking in teenagers. Binge drinking is a form of drinking that is likely to increase our risk of accidents, injuries, violence and poisoning.

## Points that may Help You Reduce Alcohol Use.

- **Less likelihood of becoming drunk if drink less often, slower and less quantity**
- **LESS ALCOHOL IS MORE – More MONEY, more ENERGY, more CONTROL – count your drinks**
- **Children learn by imitation, so its important that parents demonstrate sensible drinking behaviours**
- **You could decide not to drink every time you socialize**
- **You could decide to drink shandy's, or soft drinks or water in between drink rounds.**
- **You could think about the amount of alcohol kept at home to reduce urges**
- **You could drink sparkling alcohol free drinks with meals instead of wines**
- **It is easier to reduce in a group, encourage others to take the challenge**
- **Initiate a discussion in home about the families attitudes and behaviours to alcohol**
- **Keep a diary of drinking amounts to reflect on positives / negative effects on self /others**
- **Drink slowly so the body has a chance to deal with alcohol and reduces drunkenness**
- **Count how many drinks you drink and set limit prior to starting**
- **Eat before you drink**
- **Use non-alcoholic mixers**
- **Use spacers not chasers – take a soft drink every second drink**
- **Try not to drink alone**
- **Delay Starting to drink or set target time to finish**

## **Some Factual Information to consider in relation to Alcohol**

### **How much do we drink?**

- Over half of all Irish drinkers have a harmful pattern of drinking, that's 4 in 10 women and 7 in 10 men who drink
- A higher proportion of Irish women who drink compared with women in other European countries (77% compared to 68%)
- The average amount of alcohol consumed by every person in the country aged 15+ was 12.4 litres of pure alcohol in 2008. This amounts to 490 pints or 129 bottles of wine or 46 bottles of vodka per adult
- When we consider the above statistics alongside the fact that one in five adults in Ireland don't drink alcohol, it means that those who do drink are consuming much more than consumption statistics show
- Alcohol consumption in Ireland increased by 46% between 1987 (9.8 litres) and 2001 (14.3 litres) when our consumption reached a record high
- Consumption has been falling since this peak in 2001, to 12.4 litres in 2008
- Even at current levels we are still drinking 20% above the levels we drank at in 1986/1987
- Ireland continues to rank among the highest consumers of alcohol in the 26 countries in the enlarged EU. We drink about 20% more than the average European

### **How much do children and young people drink?**

- In the most recent survey of drinking among European 15 and 16-year-olds more Irish girls (44%) than boys (42%) reported binge-drinking in the last month (2007 ESPAD survey)
- Over half reported being drunk at least once by the age of 16
- The survey identified "a major issue around drunkenness"
- A recent report by the Office of Tobacco Control (2006) revealed that our 16 to 17-year-olds spend an average of €20.09+ per week on alcohol. This amounts to an illegal alcohol market of €145m in this country

### **Alcohol and Driving**

- Drink driving offences increased by 74% between 2003 and 2007, from 11,421 to 19,864
- In the period from 2003 to 2005, approximately 120 people were killed each year in alcohol-related crashes
- In the same period, almost one third (31%) of crash deaths were alcohol-related

- Where Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) levels were available for drivers killed, almost six out of ten had alcohol in their blood
- One in every six drivers with alcohol in their blood, who were responsible for fatal crashes in 2003, were not above the legal limit

### **Alcohol and Families**

- Between 61,000 and 104,000 children aged under 15 in Ireland are estimated to be living with parents who misuse alcohol
- A study of women who attended the Coombe Women's Hospital found that almost two-thirds (63%) of the 43,318 women surveyed said they drank alcohol during their pregnancy. Alcohol consumption, particularly in the first three months of pregnancy, can lead to disorders in how the brain develops in the womb

### **Alcohol, Mental Health and Suicide**

- Alcohol-related disorders were the third most common reason for admission to Irish psychiatric hospitals between 1996 and 2005
- Alcohol use is often a factor in suicidal behaviour. In 2006/2007 alcohol was a factor in 41% of all cases of deliberate self-harm
- One Irish study of people from three counties who died as a result of suicide, found that more than half had alcohol in their blood

### **Alcohol and Crime**

- Alcohol-related offences increased by 30% between 2003 and 2007, from 50,948 to 66,406
- Almost half of the perpetrators of homicide were intoxicated when the crime was committed
- Alcohol was found to be a factor in almost half of all cases of sexual assaults on adults according to a major survey of sexual assault and violence in Ireland. In such cases, where only one party had been drinking, the perpetrator of the sexual assault was the one drinking in the majority of cases (84% of female and 70% of male sexual assault cases)

### **Alcohol and Injuries**

- More than one in four of those attending accident and emergency departments have alcohol-related injuries, almost half of which occurred to people aged under 30 years
- Alcohol is a factor in one in four traumatic brain injuries

### **Alcohol and Health**

- Hospital discharges for alcohol-related liver disease increased by 147% between 1995 and 2004

- Alcohol-related deaths also increased during the same period, from 3.8 deaths per 100,000 to 7.1 deaths per 100,000
- Many cancers, including cancer of the mouth, larynx, oesophagus, liver, colorectum and female breast, are causally related to alcohol consumption
- Cancer of the liver has had the highest rate of increase of all cancer types between 1994 and 2003, increasing by 10.7% for females and 7.4% for males, compared to an increase for all cancers of 1.1% for females and 1.1% for males
- There is a risk relationship between the amount a woman drinks, and the likelihood of her developing the most common type of breast cancer. Drinking one standard alcoholic drink a day is associated with a 9% increase in the risk of developing breast cancer, while drinking 3-6 standard drinks a day increases the risk by 41%
- High levels of alcohol use and heavy drinking among young women are reflected in the fact that one in four women discharged from hospital for alcohol-related conditions were aged under 30, compared to 17% of men under 30 discharged
- Between 1995 and 2004, there was an increase of 29% in the proportion of teenage girls aged under 18 discharged from hospital for alcohol-related conditions compared to an increase of 9% for males under 18

*Main sources: Barry S, Kearney A, Lawlor E, McNamee E and Barry J (2006) The Coombe Women's Hospital study of alcohol, smoking and illicit drug use, 1988–2005. Dublin: Coombe Women's Hospital; Bedford D (2008) Drink Driving in Ireland. Presentation made at conference organised by the Road Safety Authority; Eurocare/COFACE (1998) Alcohol Problems in the Family: A Report to the European Union. England: Eurocare; Hope A (2008) Alcohol Related Harm In Ireland: Health Services Executive – Alcohol Implementation Group; Hope A (2007) Alcohol Consumption in Ireland 1986-2006. Health Services Executive – Alcohol Implementation Group; Mongan et al (2007) Health Related Consequences of Problem Alcohol Use. Overview 6. Dublin: Health Research Board; National Suicide Research Foundation (2008) National Registry of Deliberate Self-harm Ireland, Annual Report 2006-2007*

*compiled from [www.alcoholireland.ie](http://www.alcoholireland.ie)*

# YOUNG PEOPLE

**REMEMBER: There are no safe levels of drinking among teenagers**

As young people starting out on the road of life could we reflect on what gifts and opportunities we have been given and somehow make decisions that will be good for our physical and mental well-being? Perhaps some of the following statements might become values that you as a person might like to choose to live by:

## Values to consider for you

- I will postpone my decision to drink until I am really ready – I really want to learn how to socialise with my own strengths and personality rather than relying on alcohol or drugs to do it for me.
- I can be responsible for not developing an alcohol problem by not drinking too much ,too often and for too long
- I deserve to stay healthy and strong
- I promise myself to get my buzz or my highs from other things and by keeping a balance in my life e.g. sports, nature, music and friends
- There is always a risk involved when I misuse alcohol. I am letting alcohol be in control and not me – I don't wish to do something I will regret
- I will respect myself and I want that respect from others. To lose my self respect is a very painful and lonely place.
- I am a strong and capable human being- if I don't feel strong or confident and most of us don't all the time, I will try to talk to a trusted friend about my real feelings.
- I have the right to be angry but I do not have the right to be cruel. If I drink too much the drink can take over and I easily say or do things that I am ashamed of or that hurt other people. Friendships are too important for me to allow this to happen.
- I will respect alcohol and keep it in its right place- take it or leave it.
- Just because I may see those adults around me getting drunk – does not mean it is right to do.

### Why young people choose not to drink and drink alcohol

**GOOD NEWS** – Nearly half of school going children have never had a drink and the number of teenagers under 15years experimenting with alcohol has dropped. So remember not all young people are drinking alcohol

### Young people talk on what influences them not to drink alcohol

“The Rows”, “The Waste of money”, “Friends don't drink”

“See the effect the next day on your dad”

“See my brother drunk, don't want to be stupid”

“I can have a good buzz without drink”

“I want to achieve in life”

“Don't need it”

**If you are a young person and are drinking alcohol and are considering the challenge, remember the following:**

- Drink slowly so the body has a chance to process the alcohol
- Count how many drinks you drink
- Eat before you drink
- Use non-alcoholic mixers
- Use spacers not chasers – take a soft drink every second drink
- Try not to drink alone
- Delay Starting to drink till later in evening
- Inform yourself fully on facts and set limits for yourself
- Check out our website or [www.drugs.ie](http://www.drugs.ie) or [www.alcoholireland.ie](http://www.alcoholireland.ie) websites the I.B.D.I DVD on alcohol “ Finding a Balance – Dare to Dream”

**Remember there are great alternatives to drinking alcohol – Discuss with friend’s alternatives to drinking like other hobbies and interests. Or maybe your group can come together to organize alternatives to alcohol use**

**For help or information please contact [www.catholicbishops.ie](http://www.catholicbishops.ie) / drugs**

**Please contact us and let us know how you get on or if you have any other suggestions you may have to make this challenge possible. Contact **John Taaffe Irish Bishop’s Drug Initiative, Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co Kildare** Email. [ibdi@iecon.ie](mailto:ibdi@iecon.ie)**

# Venerable Matt Talbot Apostolate



## *Who was Matt Talbot?*

Matt Talbot was a working class Dubliner born in the middle of the nineteenth century. He was someone who through a profound religious conversion overcame his addiction to alcohol and went on to live a reformed life of heroic sanctity. He is the model and inspiration for all those struggling with addictions of various kinds and for those who work with them.



**"Never look down  
on a man who cannot  
give up the drink.  
It is easier to get out of hell!"**  
**-Venerable Matt Talbot  
1856-1925**

## Prayers

Lord, in your servant, Matt Talbot you have given us a wonderful example of triumph over addiction, of devotion to duty, and of lifelong reverence of the Holy Sacrament. May his life of prayer and penance give us courage to take up our crosses and follow in the footsteps of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Father, if it be your will that your beloved servant should be glorified by your Church, make known by your heavenly favors the power he enjoys in your sight. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

May Matt Talbot's triumph over addiction, bring hope to our community and strength to our hearts, through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

If you have information relevant to the beatification of Venerable Matt Talbot, contact:  
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83 Marlborough Street,  
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(stores.ebay.com/H-Handmade-Rosaries)

