

The Fix

Rob Marco



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: Vice-Postulator, Saint Mary's Pro-Cathedral, 100 St. Mary's Street, St. Mary's, Ontario, Canada



Prayer to Saint Mark 'the Trier'
Patron of Drug Addicts

Glorious St. Mark, holy martyr of China, you are the patron saint of drug addicts because for many years you struggled with the effects of opium addiction which affected every aspect of your life. Yet despite this you never gave up trying and praying, and in

When I first encountered the Psalms it was in a lonely shelter on the Appalachian Trail. The words of David spoke to me right then and there, as if they were written for me in that moment:

"I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand" (Ps 40:2)

I never forgot that Psalm, the first word of the Lord I had ever read.

When my wife comes home in the morning from her overnight shift in the ER, she will sometimes recount the sad tales of the patients she treated the night before. Some are accidents and

traumas, some are embarrassing injuries, but many are alcoholics being treated for withdrawal, and those addicted to drugs. Many of them have burned so many bridges they have no one to call, no one left to pick them up--no one in their life. One patient last night was twelve years sober, but started drinking again when he found himself unemployed. He was shaking so badly she had to give him 40mg of Valium (most patients get 5-10 every few hours) just to put him to sleep.

*"You should leave a prayer card with them, one of **Ven. Matt Talbot**. And if anyone is an opioid addict, of **St. Mark Ji Tianxiang**,"* I mentioned to her as we sat at the kitchen table.

"That's a great idea," she replied.

"You might be the only one in that moment to think to give them hope. Everyone needs a saint in heaven and an angel here on earth. You don't even have to say anything--just slip it in their hand, or lay in next to them in bed. If you don't do it, who will?"

St. Ignatius was a competent soldier who only picked up the *Lives of the Saints* when his romances of chivalry reading was not available as he lay convalescent in bed after being struck by a cannonball. It was a fertile ground for conversion because he had nothing else to turn to in that moment.

It's ok to be creative as Catholics, to seize upon little opportunities to share Christ with someone with your lips, to be Christ to someone with your kindness. Especially when the forgotten, the lost, the dejected and hurting who have no one else to turn to present themselves. St. Francis de Sales used to write his sermons on pieces of paper and slide them under the doors where Calvinists lived, as one example.

I once dated a super sweet girl, a Catholic with a good family, who I probably could have married. But the timing was never right. I was discerning a monastic vocation, and though we parted ways and even dated again briefly a few years later, it just never worked out. Timing is important, and everything happens in God's timing. We may read a piece of scripture one year during a productive time in our lives where it doesn't sink in--a year later we may be bankrupt and on the brink of divorce, and that same exact scripture suddenly

speaks to us and takes root in our hearts. That is because **God's Word is *alive*, not dead letters on a page.**

But we let these moments slip through our fingers often; **we forget that we are called to make disciples of all nations** (Mt 28:19-20). **This doesn't have to be big, monumental exercises that draw attention to ourselves. We shouldn't forget that we are simply beggars showing other beggars where to get bread.**

I printed out the prayers and icons of Ven. Matt Talbot and St. Mark Ji, since I didn't have time to order prayer cards before my wife's shift this evening, and since we have a laminator it should be easy to make a few she can carry in her pocket, along with a Miraculous Medal. Given how common and pervasive drug and alcohol addiction are in our hurting and trauma-riddled culture, I have a feeling she won't be short on the opportunity, as she's treating their physical symptoms, to slip a spiritual lifeline to those tonight who find themselves mired in the pit with no one to pull them out.

Ven. Matt Talbot, St. Mark Ji, *pray for us!*

Venerable Matt Talbot

- [Catholic Online Saints & Angels](#)

Facts

Birth: 1856

Death: 1925

Author and Publisher - Catholic Online

[Printable Catholic Saints PDFs](#)

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Venerable Matt Talbot - (1856 - 1925) From his early teens until age 28 Matt's only aim in **life** had been liquor. But



from that point forward, his only aim was God. Matt Talbot was born May 2, 1856, the second of twelve **children** born to Charles and **Elizabeth** Talbot. In Matt's early years he knew little security or stability. Compulsory school attendance was not in force, and Matt never attended any school regularly.

At the age of twelve Matt got his first job; it was in a wine bottling store and that is when his excessive drinking began. One evening when he was 28 he went out and found a priest, went to **confession** and "took the Pledge" for three months. Many times he felt he would not be able to hold out for three months, but within the year he renewed the pledge for life, never touching alcohol again (41 more years). His resolve was maintained by a new **life** of much prayer, daily Mass, hard work and much penance. Matt Talbot collapsed and died of heart failure on June 7, 1925. Penitential chains were found on his body after his death.

After Matt's death his reputation for **holiness** became widespread, and by 1931 the first inquiry into his **life** had begun. The **decree** on his virtues was issued October 3, 1975.

He was an opium addict
who couldn't receive
the sacraments. But
he's a martyr and a
saint



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Meg Hunter-Kilmer - published on 07/06/17

*St. Mark Ji Tianxiang couldn't stay sober, but
he could keep showing up.*

St. Mark Ji Tianxiang was an opium addict. Not *had been* an opium addict. He *was* an opium addict at the time of his death.

For years, Ji was a respectable Christian, raised in a Christian family in 19th-century China. He was a leader in the Christian community, a well-off doctor who served the poor for free. But he became ill with a violent stomach ailment and treated himself with opium. It was a perfectly reasonable thing to do, but Ji soon became addicted to the drug, an addiction that was considered shameful and gravely scandalous.

As his circumstances deteriorated, Ji continued to fight his addiction. He went frequently to confession, refusing to embrace this affliction that had taken control of him. Unfortunately, the priest to whom he confessed (along with nearly everybody in the 19th century) didn't understand addiction as a disease. Since Ji kept confessing the same sin, the priest thought, that was evidence that he had no firm purpose of amendment, no desire to do better.

Without resolve to repent and sin no more, confession is invalid. After a few years, Ji's confessor told him to stop coming back until he could fulfill the requirements for confession. For some, this might have been an invitation to leave the Church in anger or shame, but for all his fallenness, Ji knew himself to be loved by the Father and by the Church. He knew that the Lord wanted his heart, even if he couldn't manage to give over his life. He couldn't stay sober, but he could keep showing up.

And show up he did, for 30 years. For 30 years, he was unable to receive the sacraments. And for 30 years he prayed that he would die a martyr. It seemed to Ji that the only way he could be saved was through a martyr's crown.

In 1900, when the Boxer Rebels began to turn against foreigners and Christians, Ji got his chance. He was rounded up with dozens of other Christians, including his son, six grandchildren, and two daughters-in-law. Many of those imprisoned with him were likely disgusted by his presence there among them, this man who couldn't go a day without a hit. Surely he would be the first to deny the Lord.

But while Ji was never able to beat his addiction, he was, in the end, flooded with the grace of final perseverance. No threat could shake him, no torture make him waver. He was determined to follow the Lord who had never abandoned him.



His Path to Sainthood Ran Through Battlefields and Gambling Addiction

As Ji and his family were dragged to prison to await their execution, his grandson looked fearfully at him. “Grandpa, where are we going?” he asked. “We’re going home,” came the answer.

Ji begged his captors to kill him last so that none of his family would have to die alone. He stood beside all nine of them as they were beheaded. In the end, he went to his death singing the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And though he had been away from the sacraments for decades, he is a canonized saint.

St. Mark Ji Tianxiang is a beautiful witness to the grace of God constantly at work in the most hidden ways, to God’s ability to make great saints of the most unlikely among us, and to the grace poured out on those who remain faithful when it seems even the Church herself is driving them away.

On July 9, the feast of St. Mark Ji Tianxiang, let’s ask his intercession for all addicts and for all those who are unable to receive the sacraments, that they may have the courage to be faithful to the Church and that they may always grow in their love for and trust in the Lord. St. Mark Ji Tianxiang, pray for us