

**REGIONAL FORMATION: SUMMER STUDY ON FRANCISCAN  
SAINTS**

***VENERABLE MATT TALBOT  
THIRD ORDER FRANCISCAN***

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***Venerable Matt Talbot  
Third Order Franciscan  
1856-1925  
Anita Tygett, ofs—Padre Pio Forming Group***

When I answered the request to write a short, personalized message about a Franciscan saint, Venerable Matt Talbot immediately popped into my mind. As a young bride, I knew nothing much about addictions, but too soon into our marriage, I realized alcohol was a problem for my husband as well as in his own father's family which touched several of our own sons as they entered adolescent years. Matt Talbot came under my radar as the patron of alcoholics / addictions while working in one of the programs to help a son. I believe Matt Talbot's intercession has been very powerful in my family.

Matt Talbot was the second of twelve children born to a poor family in Dublin Ireland. His father was a heavy drinker who had trouble supporting a large family. At the age of 12 Matt got his first job with a wine merchant. Drinking became his focus with his earnings all going to support his thirst. After spending his earnings, he would beg, borrow, pawn his clothes and steal to satisfy his thirst. This went on until one day at age twenty eight an incident of personal rejection, made him angry with himself. He announced to his prayerful mother, "I am going to take the pledge." The first months were beyond painful for him, but the Lord blessed him with graces to attend Mass daily before getting to work.

He became a Franciscan tertiary October 18, 1891, ate very little, prayed into the nights, gave his money to charity, read many biographies of the saints. When Fr. John Cullen, a Jesuit priest founded the Pioneer Total Abstinence Asso. In 1898, Matt became one of the first members. Talbot was on his way to Mass on Trinity Sunday, June 7, 1925, when he collapsed and died of heart failure. It was discovered chains wound around his waist and an arm and a leg were symbols of his devotion to Mary. He is remembered as saying, "Never be too hard on the man who can't give up drink. It's as hard to give up the drink as it is to raise the dead to life again. But both are possible and even easy for Our Lord. We have only to depend on him."

Briefly, Matt Talbot's early life, unfortunately, is repeated all around us throughout the world. As a young boy, he did not attend school, drank for 16 years of more, had no goals. But he had a faith-filled mother who did not stop loving him or praying for him. Those prayers were answered when the Holy Spirit touched Matt through a deeply felt rejection (his rock-bottom event) and turned him towards the Lord. He was filled with gifts of the Holy Spirit which led him into a life of conversion, piety, devotion to Our Lady. We Secular Franciscans may have an addiction ourselves or we surely have all experienced a family member, friend or neighbor with an addiction of some sort. Matt Talbot's life of prayer, piety, penance and perseverance should give us love for intercessory prayer and an example of living a simpler life.

THREE THINGS I CANNOT ESCAPE: *THE EYE OF GOD, THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE, THE STROKE OF DEATH.* *In company, guard your tongue, In your family, guard your temper. When alone, guard your thoughts.* Matt Talbot: Anita Tygett@hotmail.com <http://www.hotmail.com>