

If you are having thoughts of suicide, if you need mental health-related crisis support, if you are worried about someone else, PLEASE CALL OR TEXT **988** or visit the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline chat to connect with a trained crisis counselor

**PARISH SUPPORT GROUPS**

- ◆ **Calix Society**—The Church of Incarnation 240 Main St. Mantua—EVERY Monday—ZOOM—8PM
- ◆ **Community Connections** The Church of Incarnation, 240 Main St., Mantua—EVERY Saturday-In-Person & ZOOM—9:30 AM
- ◆ For more information about these ministries or how to start an addiction healing support ministry in your parish, call JoAnne Farrell at 856-342-4057.

# Addictions Healing & Recovery Newsletter

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**Sacraments, strategy help Catholics stay sober amid holidays, say experts—  
Excerpt from G. Christian, Our Sunday Visitor Reporter**

The Christmas Season can be challenging for those in addiction recovery, but sacramental grace and practical strategies can keep those seeking sobriety on track. “It’s a very, very stressful (time) for many people who struggle with addictions, because there are parties for work, there’s a lot of peer pressure and there’s a lot of family pressure — especially if the family is in denial that the person is struggling or that someone else in the family is in active addiction,” said Edmundite Father Thomas F. X. Hoar, president of St. Edmund’s Retreat, a Catholic retreat community with several recovery ministries located on Enders Island, Conn. Alcohol consumption typically rises during the Christmas holidays.

For Catholics in addiction recovery, following the principles of 12-step recovery groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Overeaters Anonymous is vital during the Christmas and New Year’s holiday season. Equally important — and in fact part of the 12-step approach — is turning directly to God for help amid the threat holiday indulgence poses to sobriety. “Double up on your prayer life,” said Father Hoar. “The second step (of the 12 steps) says that ‘we came to believe a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.’ I think a lot of times people in recovery skip over that.”

Sacramental grace is essential to lasting sobriety, said Father Douglas McKay, founder of the Philadelphia-based Our House Ministries, a Catholic recovery ministry, a papal “missionary of mercy” and rector of the Malvern Retreat House in Malvern, PA. Father McKay says “The Eucharist is the greatest source of strength for sobriety—The Blessed Sacrament — that’s where all the blessings are flowing”.



# TIPS & TOOLS for **RECOVERY THAT WORKS!** OVERCOME HOLIDAY **TRIGGERS**



## Sacraments, strategy help Catholics stay sober amid holidays, say experts—

Excerpt from G. Christian, Our Sunday Visitor Reporter, December 2023—Continued

‘Our House Ministries’ Executive Director, Ken Johnston, listed several practical strategies those in recovery can take to ensure sobriety amid the holidays. “Make sure you know where 12-step meetings are every day in case you need one,” he said, with both Father McKay and Father Hoar stressing the need to rely on 12-step sponsors, who support individuals in their recovery, when tempted. Have a specific plan as well for navigating family and business holiday gatherings, which can trigger relapses into addiction, all three experts said. “It’s pretty hard to stay away from the parties, but I would suggest that they make an appearance and not stay through those long hours of partying,” said Father McKay.

Johnston recommended that those in recovery “always have an escape plan,” so that they “have a way to leave” if needed. “Bring your own car or, if with a friend or spouse, make sure they know you may need to leave unexpectedly,” he said. . In addition, “make sure you know what is contained in the food you eat, whether it is liquor in candies or marijuana in brownies,” he cautioned, adding that edible forms of marijuana and other intoxicants “are a big thing these days.” Watch over your drink, he said, and “be very careful if you set it down. Not only could someone slip something in it, but alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks can have the same appearance and you don’t want to accidentally ingest a mixed drink.”

Family members, though well-meaning, should avoid bringing up scenes from past Christmases, reminding loved ones in recovery of addiction behaviors that occurred at previous gatherings, said Father McKay. “Sometimes they’ll say, ‘Now, remember what happened when you were using drugs or alcohol and what you did to your family and your kids,’” said Father McKay. “Well, that’s the last thing (those in recovery) need to hear. ... Right away the guilt and shame come back, and they want to numb themselves again.” In some cases, simply avoiding parties with alcohol — or hosting non-alcoholic gatherings directly — may be the best option, said Father Hoar.

Above all, focusing on the reason for the season is key, said experts. “It’s also a time for us to really come to that deeper intimacy with Christ,” said Father Hoar. “The King of Kings comes in humility. For someone in addiction, you know, there’s a struggle with shame and guilt, but Christ came to bring light to the message of His coming, and to bring a new sense of hope.”



*“It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you.” - St. Teresa of Calcutta*

### The Word became flesh and lived among us

*Reflection:* At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus and that God became flesh in the person of Jesus. The omnipotent and Almighty God humbled Himself and became one of us.

Remarkable indeed. Mother Teresa reminds us that Christ is born anew every time we visit the sick, feed the poor, and visit the imprisoned. Rejoice! Christ is born in Bethlehem.

*Prayer:* Alleluia! Praise You Lord God for You are the Savior of the world.

