

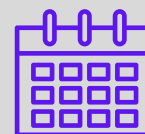
# SNAPSHOT

March 2021 Issue 21



St. Thomas Aquinas School  
**SAINTS**

810 Fifth Street  
International Falls, MN  
56649



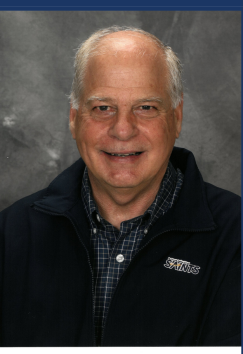
## DATES TO REMEMBER

- March 15 NO SCHOOL  
Catechetical  
Formation
- March 19 NO SCHOOL  
Exchange Day
- March 26 End of 3rd Quarter
- March 30 Report Cards  
Go Home
- March 31 Parent/Teacher  
Conferences



NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY: St. Thomas School admits students of any race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at school. It does not discriminate on the bases of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship programs, and other school-administered programs.





## *From the Principal's Desk*

I spoke too soon last month about the pleasant winter we're experiencing. February was payback time from Mother Nature. The prolonged cold spell forced us to hunker down. Students spent their noon hours in Aquinas Hall. But we survived, as we always do every winter, and we fared much better than Texas. What will March bring? Lots of snow? We're due! Stay tuned. Continue to Think Spring, everybody!

### **Report Cards, Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Report Cards go home Tuesday, March 30. Parent Teacher conferences are Wednesday, March 31.

Spring Parent-Teacher Conferences are scheduled by request only. If you would like a conference with your child's teacher, please contact them to arrange a meeting time on Wednesday, March 31.



### **Lenten Insight: The Difference Between Fasting and Abstaining.**

The season of Lent is a time in which we do penance and prepare ourselves for the wonder of Easter. We pray more. We make a greater effort to financially help those in need. This is called almsgiving. We make special efforts to make amends for our sinfulness (penance), and we curb our physical desires by restricting our intake of food.

Fasting means that we eat only one full meatless meal and two smaller meals with no snacking between meals. For Catholics, this obligation is observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Abstinence means that we eat no meat, including poultry, or meat by-products. Catholics observe abstinence from meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent.

People who are ill or have particular medical conditions, and women who are pregnant, are not expected to observe these rules.

## 2020-2021 Fundraising

COVID-19 is making it very difficult to fundraise. For a second year in a row, we're unable to host our Spring Silent Auction. Other events planned by our Advisory Committee have been postponed or cancelled until COVID restrictions are lifted. Our YTD Fundraising Budget calls for us to have raised \$61,833 by January. To date our actual fundraising intake is \$13,395, **only 22% of our goal**. This concerns me.

The Advisory Committee is planning several smaller events to help meet this deficit. Watch for details of these upcoming events on the STA Facebook page and notices sent home with students. We need everyone to participate.

Fr. Thomas and I will conduct a direct mail campaign to past Silent Auction Supports. Hopefully they will respond generously. My wife, Jean, and I plan to donate our stimulus check from the federal government to St. Thomas School. We encourage other seniors (grandparents) to give half of their checks also. Spread the word! Plant the seed! Let everyone know! We need to raise \$60,000 for our current year operating budget!

## Pizza Fundraiser

The Advisory Committee's first fundraising project is selling Heggies Pizza. Brittany Lemieux is heading up our efforts. Order forms will be sent home with students on March 5th. Completed orders need to be returned to school by March 15. Pizzas will arrive at school on April 1st. Brittany has arranged for parent volunteers to sort the pizzas and have them ready for pick up at the end of the school day of April 1st. Our goal is to sell 300 pizzas. If all goes well, we may try this again later in the school year.



## Catholic School Raffle

Catholic Financial Raffle results are finalized. St. Thomas School Families sold 2,982 ticket and raised **\$14,910**. The top selling families are:

- Bee Gierszewski                      300 tickets
- Charlie Guziec                        160 tickets
- Averie & Whitney French    130 tickets
- Ellie & Kelty Nicholson        90 tickets
- Kelly & Kristen Koerbitz       60 tickets
- Jack Pastor                              50 tickets



**Great Job, Everyone! Thank You for Your Fine Efforts!**

## **COVID-19 Up-date**

I want to thank everyone for being vigilant and following proper COVID protocols outlined in our Preparedness Plan. As a result, **we've had no student or staff absences due to COVID during the month of February.**

43 students and 7 staff members have been quarantined 206.5 days since the beginning of the school year. We average 4.13 days absent because of COVID. We've had 2 confirmed student COVID-19 cases. (1 family), December 22..



STA school staff continue to participate in the COVID-19 Saliva Testing program offered by MDE. Staff is being tested every other week. Our first test date was Friday, January 12. All school staff are encouraged to be tested, regardless of symptoms. Testing is optional for staff and free of charge.

All St. Thomas School staff members who want to be vaccinated received their first COVID shot February 5. We are scheduled to receive our second dose on Friday, March 5. I understand that people sometime become quite sick (some for several days) after receiving the second Moderna dose. If this happens, we may not have enough teachers to staff our school for a day or two. Should this come to pass on Monday and Tuesday, March 8-9, you will receive notification from School Messenger.

## **COVID Relief for Private Schools**

The federal government has authorized a COVID-19 relief program for which St. Thomas Aquinas School is eligible to participate. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has posted the Preliminary Allocations of GEER II Funds (EANS).

Total Emergency Assistance for Non-public School Fund (EANS Fund) \$2.75 billion

Total EANS Funds awarded to Minnesota \$41,697,717

Total Number of Minnesota Non-public Schools eligible for EANS Funds – 5,180 schools

Minimum amount of EANS Funds allocated per school - \$10,000

St. Thomas Aquinas (STA) Nonpublic School Allocation of GEER II Funds (EANS)

- **\$34,426** (This is only an estimate.)

Allocation Method:

- 60% based on Enrollment (STA \$12, 673)
- 40% based on Percentage of Free/Reduced Lunch Counts (STA \$21,752)



Timeline for distribution of funds:

- Feb 18 – Preliminary allocation posted
- Feb 22 – MDE submits application/certification for Governors’ Emergency Education Relief (GEER) II funding to the U.S. Department of Education (ED)
- Mar 1 – Anticipated date of legislative approval for the spending of this money
- Mar 1 – Application available to the schools exact date is dependent upon when spending authority is received)
- **Mar 1-30 – Schools complete and submit their applications**
- April 1-30 – Final allocations calculated and posted
- **May 1 – Schools may begin submitting expenditures for reimbursement**
- October – All funds must be obligated (exact date to be determined by the date ED approves state’s application)

We're in the process of gathering documentation in preparation for making application for funding. We've conducted a walk-through with Small Town Tech to identify technology needs which qualify for grant funding. I anticipate about \$17,000 will be used for expenses already incurred, which leaves about \$17,426 for new purchases.

St. Thomas Aquinas School has accumulated **\$34,995.81 in COVID-19 expenses since March, 2020.**

### **Catholic Daughters Educational Awards**

The Catholic Daughters annually offers St. Thomas Catholic School students the opportunity to enter their National Educational Contest. Categories include: art, essay, poetry, computer art, music and photography. The entries are judged and monetary gifts are awarded. This year’s themes were “*Let all you do be done with love*” 1Cor. 16: 14 and “*Show love to one another.*”

On Wednesday, February 17, Catholic Daughters presented Educational Awards to the students at St. Thomas Catholic School. Presenting the awards were Catholic Daughter Julie Hindman, Fr. Thomas and Catholic Daughter Educational leader Marnie Kostiuik. The first-place winner in the Art Category was **Sidney Krasaway**. Second place winner was **Ava Gutormson** and third place winner was **Elise Nicholson**. Sidney’s first-place art picture was sent on to Catholic Daughter’s state competition. Congratulations and thank you to Sidney and the other participants who shared their artistic imagination and originality.





## **Catholic Schools Week**

*Our Catholic Schools Week celebration was low key, but noteworthy. All activities were well planned and successful. All participants, students and adults, enjoyed themselves immensely. Special thanks to Heather McBride for doing the majority of the planning and preparation. She brought a new perspective and different ideas to our celebration.*

### **First Responders Appreciation**

First Responders Appreciation was held in Aquinas Hall. About ten law enforcement, fire, and ambulance personnel attended our event. Gift bags were presented to our guests. Mrs. Tompkin wrote a special song and led students in singing. Fifth and sixth graders recited a tribute to our peace officers. First Responders were touched by the ceremony and thanked us for our kindness.



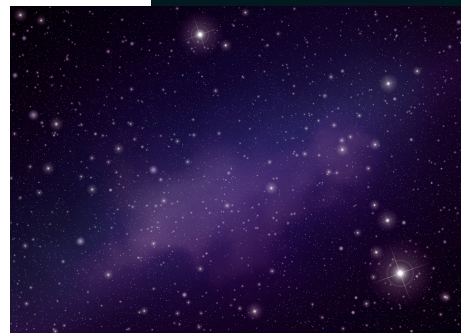




**Outdoor Fun**

All had a great time making snow volcanos, eating s'mores and drinking hot chocolate during our **Outdoor Fun Day**. According to one of our students, "It was the best school day ever!"



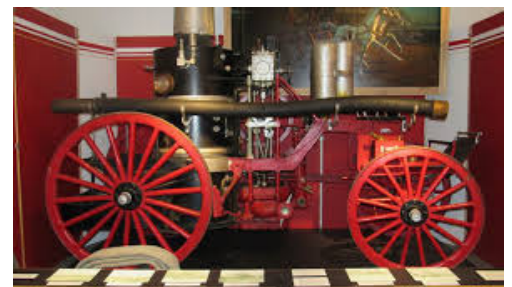


**Wacky Wednesday**

The Wacky Wednesday Zoom Presentation with Ranger Jackie from Voyageur’s National Park was interesting and informative. Students learned about preserving the Night Sky. Thank you, Ranger Jackie!

**Downtown Visit**

Walking downtown to **Koochiching County Museum and Coffee Landing** was a bit breezy, but worthwhile. Students were well behaved and presented a positive impression of St. Thomas School. Many knew nothing about our local museum and had never been there. But after visiting, many want to visit again with their parents. Thank you Ashley LaVigne, Museum Curator, for informing us about your famous grandfather, Bronko Nagurski.

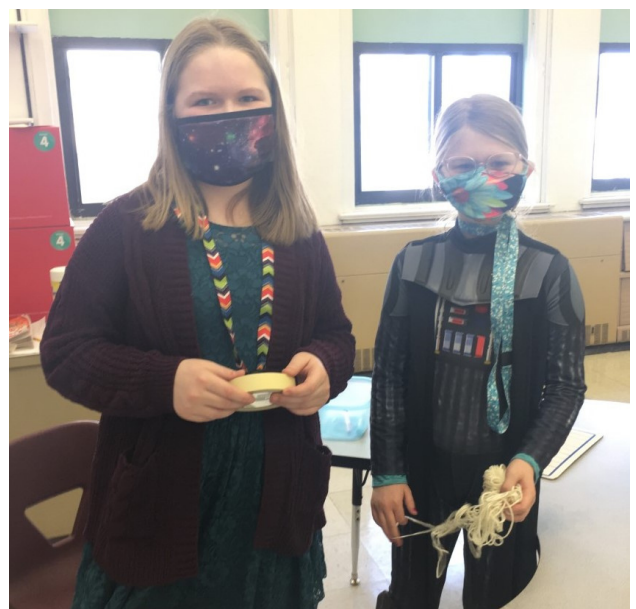
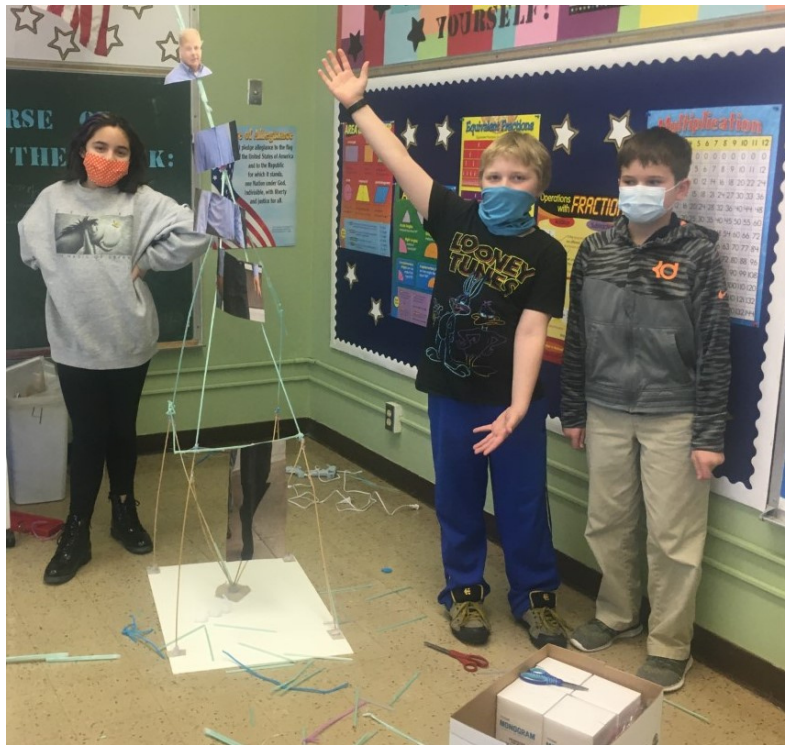






## **Celebrating Our Creativity**

On Friday we **Celebrated Our Creativity** by building structures or sculptures. Most classes managed to build a structure as tall as Mr. Hilfer and one of them even looked like him. *Good Job, Builders!*



**St. Thomas School is a great place to learn, serve, lead, and succeed.**

# TEACHERS CORNER

## Preschool News – Ms Brittany

### February Themes

Hello families! This month has been especially cold so we have spent more days inside getting our movements in with dancing and games. Now that we are seeing warmer days, please remember to send warm clothes including insulated gloves and hats. The themes for this month are “Feeling Fantastic” and “Tropics in Winter”.

**Feeling Fantastic:** We can do many things to help our bodies feel good. The children will learn how to stay healthy by practicing proper hygiene. National Children’s Dental Health Month is the perfect time to reinforce healthy dental habits and other personal care routines. The children will also focus on identifying and managing feelings to boost emotional health.

### Tropics in Winter:

Stay warm this winter by taking a trip to the rainforest. The children will learn fun jungle songs, study tropical climates, and play silly animal games. Science and social studies are emphasized in this theme.

### February Focus:

Letters: Pp, Qq, Rr

Numbers: 13, 14

Shape: Heart

Color: Pink

Alphabet Words: palm, panda, pelican, plum, quail, quartz, quiet, quiver, rainbow, robin, rocket, roots

We had fun during Catholic Schools Week and participating in all the fun activities! Reminder that raffle tickets are due at the end of the month.





## Kindergarten News – Mrs Kostiuk

We've been busy! Addition and subtraction with numbers one to ten have been super exciting in our room. Ash Wednesday marks the 100th day of school.

We count with groups of tens, fives and ones with teen numbers. Surprisingly math equations are important for kindergartners. I've recently used sticky notes and write out numbers, plus, minus, equal signs and mixed it up to create a game. If you have squares of paper, you can also do this by writing problems out for them to solve. They love it!

They can also move the numbers and decide if it makes sense and is a true problem or if it isn't. The squares can be used as cards and reused for another time. This new game gets them thinking and reading the equations!

New concepts in Phonics and Spelling are the letters:  
f, r, s, l (short sound).

Themes covered in this month's Reading/Writing Workshop:  
Library, Parks, Art Stores, Animals that travel, and Bees.

Letters: f, c, b, h, l, a, k, n, o, p, r, s and t have been introduced.

Students are able to identify the letter sound in the beginning and the middle of words.

Many new sight words have been introduced with the stories and we are reading up to five books a day!



If you have IXL and RAZ KIDS, continue practicing Math and Reading skills at home. RAZ KIDS IDs and IXL log-ins are available if you don't have them. We can get you extra copies to log-in.



## First and Second Grade News – Miss Pierce

The gradual lengthening of our days reminds us of God's promise of Spring! Hopefully the bitter cold is behind us as we enter March!

We recently celebrated our 100th day of school! Thank you to the students who brought items to count. We practiced counting by 2's, 5's, and 10's.

Thank you for your support of our "Pennies for Patients" fundraiser which benefits the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. At the time of this printing, we did not have a final total for our donations. The students are amazing with their generosity of prayer and monetary gifts. Thank you for fostering this trait.

As we journey through Lent with our Lenten egg activity, we strive to do good deeds for others and better ourselves as Christians. The students inspire me with their daily kindnesses toward fellow students and myself.

Our class will be conducting the liturgy on Thursday, March 4, at 8:30a.m. We hope you can join us!

Think Spring!

Miss Pierce



LEUKEMIA &  
LYMPHOMA  
SOCIETY®





## Third and Fourth Grade News – Mrs Ecklund

March is just around the corner and with it we hope to have some nice weather. Spring is coming, bringing smiles and sunshine!

We have begun our Lenten journey with a sense of purpose. We have discussed ways we can become closer to Jesus through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. As directed by Father Thomas, we will all be learning the Guardian Angel prayer. Ask your children about this prayer. They should be able to recite it from memory soon. I said this prayer all the time as a child, but have forgotten about it until this prompt from Father. It's nice to have it back in my life and I hope your children enjoy it too.

March also brings our annual food drive for Falls Hunger Coalition. It is especially important to share with others this year due to the increase need in our community. The financial support we will receive from the FoodShare organization and Hunger Solutions later in the year will be determined in large part by the amount of food and funds we raise in March. The more we are able to bring in, the larger the size of the check we will receive later. I want to thank your in advance for your generous support!

Our Science class is going well. We have played with matter and watched it change. We have also experimented with hand lenses and have seen some pretty cool things that we don't normally see. Math is moving along with the Third graders soon to delve into fractions and the Fourth graders learning about Algebra. The kiddos are really making an effort and some even have fun! They love it when a concept comes together for them!

Happy Lent and Happy Spring!

Mrs. Ecklund





## Fifth and Sixth Grade News – Miss Raboin

The month of February had an excellent start with Catholic Schools Week! Various festivities over the week took special consideration into celebrating our nation, the outdoors, our community, our faith, and our creativity. We also had a wonderful Ash Wednesday service and have been discussing the Season of Lent in school.

As the month of March has approached us, there is yet another essay contest that is due on March 19, the Alive in Christ Contest. Students are writing about when they feel close to God, or a specific moment or story where they felt God's power at work.

We have also recently switched from Social Studies to Science and will be starting new units in Math. 5th grade will be working on multiplying and dividing fractions and 6th grade will be focusing on operations with whole numbers, fractions, and decimals.

Lastly, both grades have gotten in a routine of highlighting important information or taking notes as they read.

Hoping March brings good health and warmer weather our way!

Ms. Raboin



# **Virtues in Practice**

## **Faith– Hope – Charity**

### **March Virtue of the Month – Temperance: enjoying things in a proper, balanced way**

What are some things that you like to do for fun? What would happen if we only did these fun things and did not do other things that we have to do? Who would take out the trash? Who would play on the sports teams and represent our school? Who would find a cure for the world's diseases? If we only did what we wanted, we would become selfish and unhealthy.

Temperance helps us to balance the different aspects of our life. God wants us to enjoy good things, but in the right amounts so that they are good for us. If we are temperate, then we will be free to enjoy things or set them aside as needed, instead of becoming irresponsible or addicted.

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## ***What is a Virtue?***

*A good habit is called a virtue. A bad habit is called a vice. Habits grow by practice. God always gives us the grace to choose and do what is good. If we think about what is right and open our hearts to God, we will make good choices and grow in virtue. Virtues make us free, happy, and holy.*

# Virtues in Practice

## Faith– Hope – Charity

### Pre-K – 2nd Grade

Saints of the Month: **Saint Teresa of Avila, 1515-1582, Spain (Feast Day: October 15)**



Saint Teresa sometimes had trouble with self-control, especially with the amount of time she spent reading and talking to friends. As she grew closer to God, she learned to give the right amount of time to Him and to others. When she joined the Carmelite nuns, they had forgotten their rules about how much time they should be in silence so that they could talk to God. She helped them to take time for silence and prayer and to take time to play and have fun together.

**Prayer:** "Dear Saint Teresa, please help me to always use good things with thankfulness and self-control. Teach me how to take and use only what I need, not all I want. I want to be temperate for love of Jesus! Amen. Saint Teresa, pray for us."

### 3rd Grade – 5th Grade

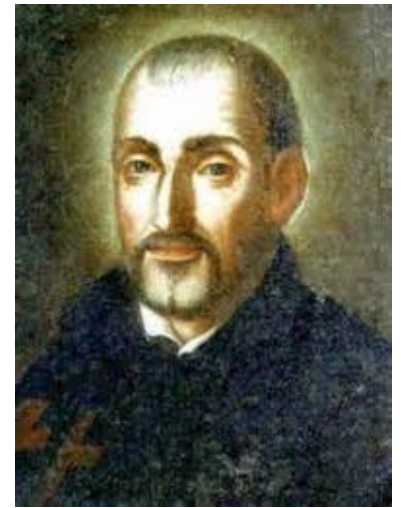
Saint of the Month: **Saint Camillus de Lellis, 1550-1614, Italy (Feast Day: July 18)**

While Camillus was still a boy, he developed bad habits of foul language, meanness, and gambling. He was bright but lazy, and by the age of 12 he quit going to school so he could spend his time gambling and fighting. At 17, he entered the army but continued his bad behavior. After being wounded in battle, he had to take a job – working in the garden of a Franciscan monastery! It was through the compassion of one of the friars that God's grace entered his heart, and Camillus gave his life to Christ.

Camillus went to Saint James Hospital in Rome where he became both a patient (to recover from the wounds he had received in battle) and a caregiver. Now, instead of giving into his sinful desires to gamble, he followed a strict life and practiced many penances. With Saint Philip Neri as his spiritual guide, Saint

Camillus was eventually ordained a priest and founded a religious order, the Congregation of the Servants of the Sick and Poor, to serve the physical and spiritual needs of the sick in hospitals. For the rest of his life, Saint Camillus saw the opportunity to serve the sick as an opportunity to serve the Lord.

**Prayer:** "Dear Saint Camillus, by accepting the grace of God, you were able to overcome your desires and give your love and your time to Him, especially by caring for those who were sick. Give me your spirit of temperance so that my love and desires will always be centered in Christ our Lord. Amen. Saint Camillus de Lellis, pray for us."





# Virtues in Practice

## Faith– Hope – Charity

### 6th Grade

Saint of the Month: **Venerable Matt Talbot, 1856-1925, Ireland**

Matt Talbot was a small but strong man, who over came alcoholism by prayer, penance, and the virtue of temperance. His daily life was based on a quote from an Irish saint, Saint Columbanus: "Pray daily, fast daily, work daily, and study daily."

Matt was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1856. His mother and father had twelve children and worked very hard. Matt's father took jobs wherever he could, and the family often had to move. In those days, school was not mandatory in Ireland. Matt did not like to go to school, but chose instead to find work.

One of his first jobs was at a wine bottling store. It was not unusual for a company to pay its employees every week at the local pub. It was also customary that the pub owner then require every worker to spend some of their newly received money on alcohol at the pub! Matt soon began drinking after work, and it quickly became a serious problem. He and his friends would often drink more than the money they earned working, and Matt even turned to begging or stealing from passersby if it would help him get money to buy alcohol. His mother quickly found out about his drinking and prayed constantly for him to stop, but his habit continued for many years. One day while waiting outside a pub, some friends he knew refused to even acknowledge him. They had lost all respect for him, and he finally lost respect for himself.

He went home to his mother, who had never given up on him, and told her he was ready to "take the Pledge". This meant that he was ready to stop drinking. His pledge was for three months. Although it was very difficult, he did it! He took another pledge for six more months and he made it through that too. Finally he made the pledge for life.

From that point on, his devotion to his Catholic faith grew. He worked hard to repay any money he owed to pub owners or others from whom he had taken money. He spent the rest of his life working hard but always for God's glory. He took care of his mother when she was old.

He prayed much each day and did penance for the life he had lived as an alcoholic. He slept in a small bedroom on a hard plank bed with a wood-block pillow. He was generous to others and gave money to charitable causes, even though he did not have extra money. He read many books about the lives of the saints, knowing that the saints were his friends.

He was often seen praying or going in or out of the church. He attended Mass daily, sometimes several times a day, and went to Confession weekly.



# **Virtues in Practice**

## **Faith– Hope – Charity**

It was while he was on his way to church on Trinity Sunday, 1925, when he died of heart failure. Matt Talbot was declared "venerable" in 1973. He is the patron saint of alcoholics and addicts. Today there are "Matt Talbot houses" around the world that rescue and treat people with addictions.

"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." – Venerable Matt Talbot

**Prayer:** "Venerable Matt Talbot, help me to use and enjoy in a balanced way the good things God has given, with gratitude for His generosity and respect for His creation. Please pray for me and for my friends that we will be strong in the virtue of temperance, and turn to God for help in times of temptation. Amen. Venerable Matt Talbot, pray for us."

### **Monthly Home Project Suggestions - Temperance**

**Pre-K – 2nd:** Review: What is temperance? Who is Saint Teresa of Avila?  
What does it mean to have "too much of a good thing"?

We use the virtue of temperance to fight temptations and to use well the good things that God gave us, like food, games, and toys. Act out the following situations and show how you would be temperate:

- Your Mom bakes your favorite cookies, and you feel like eating all of them before dinner.  
What could you choose to do?
- Two friends really want to play on the computer all afternoon and not stop to do their homework.  
Act out a temperate choice.
- The teacher puts new, cool pencils in the pencil jar at school.  
You want to take more of them, but you already have three.  
Act out a choice you should make.

How does only having a healthy amount of something help us hope in God?

What did you do to grow in temperance this month? Draw a picture.



# Virtues in Practice

## Faith– Hope – Charity

**3rd Grade – 6th Grade:**

Review: What is temperance? Who is Saint Camillus de Lellis? Who is Venerable Matt Talbot?

**6th Grade Discussion**

- Why do you think Matt Talbot turned so easily to alcohol?
- How could Matt have practiced temperance in his early life?
- How did he become more temperate as an adult?

3rd - 6th Grade Activity: Think about how you spend 24 hours of a regular school day. Add an amount of time next to each activity. Make sure all the times add up to 24 hours.

**MY USE OF TIME IN A TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY**

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Number of Hours</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Number of Hours</u>
Sleep	_____	Internet (not homework)	_____
Meals	_____	Videogames	_____
Snacks	_____	Reading	_____
School	_____	Family time	_____
Homework	_____	Playing outside	_____
Practice	_____	Chores, Service	_____
Television	_____	Prayer	_____

Do you use your time as it should be used?

Do you do activities in moderation?

Do you spend enough time on prayer, homework, family time, and helping others?

# **Virtues in Practice**

## **Faith- Hope - Charity**

Since most of this month is during Lent, choose to sacrifice something good as a way to focus more on God and others. Making small sacrifices can strengthen your will to face bigger challenges. It can help you grow in reliance on God's grace. Periodically throughout Lent, stop and reflect on how you are doing with your Lenten sacrifice. If you fail, ask God for strength and then start again.

**Temperance: enjoying good things in a proper, balanced way**