

Temperance Seeking Support

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We live in a world where many people wish to march to the beat of their own drum. Where freedom and tolerance means, 'let me do what I want and you can do what you want, as long as it does not interfere with my freedom'.

No one likes to be restricted or put in a strait jacket; yet, we know from the floods last December, for a river to reach its goal requires solid and high banks. Without them, we would be floating on a lake. When a society takes down the protective banks so that everyone can be totally free, we could easily become a lazy lake with people floating around doing their own thing but really going nowhere.

Once there is a focus in life, floating aimlessly disappears. A purpose develops with its own safeguards, priorities and balance. It is this balance that we associate with temperance.

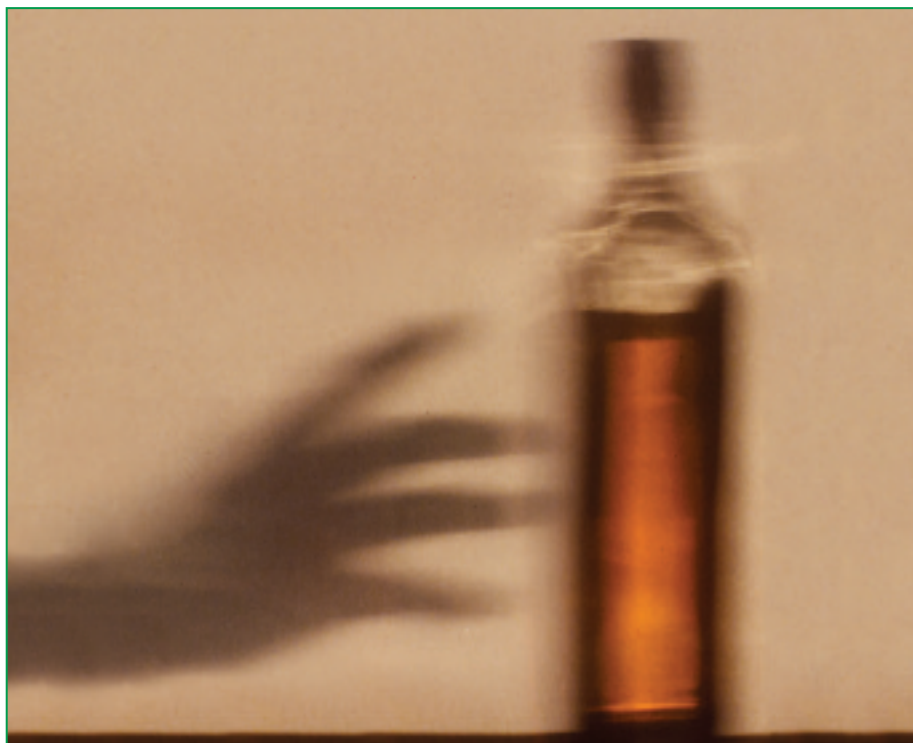
It may demand sacrifices to attain a goal for self or others. Once the habit of temperance is formed in one area of life, it can be drawn on whenever required.

Temperance has an unpopular image, it is perceived as restrictive, a sort of kill-joy and spoil-sport. Nothing could be further from the reality. Temperance brings balance and prevents excess getting a grip. Bad tempered behaviour or intemperate language is neither accepted in sport nor in social behaviour.

Society is all too aware of how drugs, including alcohol, have done such damage to sport, recreation, working and family life. It has become so difficult for people to resist the culture of artificial and chemical enhancement for all kinds of performances and entertainment. Nature's balance is being abused. Maybe it is no harm to remember that forced performance is precisely what enables weed killer to do its job!

Laudato Si' is highlighting the need to respect the balance of nature; we interfere with it at our peril and that of future generations.

One way of assisting the young people of Ireland in forming the habit of balance in life is through the



Confirmation Commitment being piloted in parishes as part of the Confirmation preparation and optional pledge.

The *Confirmation Commitment* encourages candidates, with the assistance of their sponsors, to make a commitment to themselves and to others to lead a healthy lifestyle, respect themselves and others, and to use the knowledge about alcohol and drugs to stay safe.

The gifts of wisdom, knowledge, right judgement and courage are called on to take, and to keep, their commitment. The sponsors will be a little like Isaiah, once the 'coals' reached his lips, he received the courage to say 'send me' – I will be a Sponsor. (See irishbishopsdrugsinitiative.com for details and resources).

All the research confirms that alcohol use before the age of twenty-one affects the still developing brain and emotions.

Professor Frank Murray, President of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, and over 30 other professionals with experience of the effects of alcohol misuse, stated in an Open Letter before Christmas:

'Ireland has led the way before and paved the way for the smoking ban. We urge everyone in Ireland to support the Public Health (Alcohol Bill), so that it can be a tipping point for major cultural change in Ireland's harmful drinking habits. It will be life-changing in future and present generations and reduce the harm and deaths caused by alcohol, and the suffering and grief borne by far too many Irish men, women and children as a result'.

The Bill will serve as a 'river bank' supporting the river of life to achieve its purpose.

Young people need the support of this Bill for protection, and the *Confirmation Commitment* to enable the young people of Ireland to become temperate and balanced in life so that they can follow their call, like Peter in the Gospel of Temperance Sunday.

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