

Avoiding alcohol during the holidays

The holidays are a time for family and friends to gather and share laughs, memories – and perhaps a drink or two. But for people recovering from an addiction, all that alcohol often present at special events can be worrisome.

“Holiday parties are when many alcoholics fall off the wagon,” says John Collopy, author of the book “The Reward of Knowing” (www.johncollopy.com), which relates his own struggles with addiction. “There just seems to be alcohol everywhere, sometimes even at the office. It can be very difficult, especially for people who have only recently stopped drinking.”

Although Collopy has been sober for many years, he knows that the holidays are a gateway to his past life. He used alcohol to help him deal with memories of a troubled childhood with a dysfunctional family and abusive father. When he became an adult, he quickly became dependent on alcohol to get through the day, plus he had anger-management issues.

“Every day for an alcoholic is a challenge, but over the holidays it can be overwhelming,” says Collopy, who today is a successful real estate broker. “People don’t realize when they offer drinks to people over the holidays how difficult it is for some people to say no. Real alcoholics know they can never have just one.”

For those who want to stay sober during the holidays, here are a few tips from Alcoholics Anonymous and the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation:

• Skip any drinking occasions you are nervous about. If you are really concerned

about an event, just ask yourself if you really need to go. But you don’t have to just sit home. Take your family out and look at the holiday lights or find another activity that gets you in the holiday mood without alcohol.

• Leave early. If you know you will be tempted to drink at a party, plan in advance to tell people when you arrive that you only stopped by briefly, and have somewhere else you need to be.

• Go with a sober friend. There is safety in numbers, and you can help each other should you be tempted to drink.

• Carry around a soft drink. If you already have a drink in your hand, people are less likely to ask you if you want a drink.

• Avoid known risks. If you know your brother is a heavy drinker, for example, stay away from him. If you know the same party last year was full of excessive drinking, just stay home.

• Create new traditions. It can be a downer if you have to skip all the holiday fun. So come up with some of your own. Buy a new board game, go look at the holiday decorations or host your own small non-alcoholic party with sober friends.

It has been many years since Collopy was an alcoholic, but he says the rewards of his life now are much better than any drink he ever took.

“Once you’re sober, you can allow yourself to begin to dream about life again, the way you did when you were a kid,” he says. “That doesn’t mean those dreams are going to be easy to achieve, but at least you can look at them and say, ‘I’ve got a shot.’”

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Former Sisters priest sentenced to 25 years

By **Jim Cornelius**
Editor in Chief

Rev. W. Thomas Faucher, 73, who served as parish priest at St. Edward the Martyr Catholic Church in Sisters for six years ending in 2002 has been sentenced to 25 years in prison without parole in connection with charges that he amassed thousands of images of child pornography on his computer and shared some of those images with others.

Many of those images were described by investigators as “extremely disturbing.”

Faucher, who had retired from the Diocese of Boise, Idaho, was sentenced December 20 in Ada County, Idaho.

Katy Moeller of the *Idaho Statesman* reported December 20 and 21 that “the files were described by police as violent, disturbing and torturous, some involving children crying.”

A detective testified at the sentencing hearing that, “The volume of [images] was something I haven’t come across.” Moeller reported that the detective spoke “about how the extreme nature of the images affected him and others that investigated.”

Details on the nature of Faucher’s crimes may be accessed through the *Idaho*

Statesman’s reporting. A link to the *Statesman* will be provided with the online version of this story.

Faucher made a 17-minute statement during sentencing, in which he stated that, “I was one really sick puppy. I screwed up big time ... I feel so much remorse and anger.” *Statesman* reporter Ruth Brown tweeted during the statement that, “He wants to build a future making up for what he’s done. He would like to meet with victims and apologize to them and give lectures on the evils of child pornography.”

According to the *Statesman*, special prosecutor Kassandra Slaven testified that an “evaluation concluded Faucher is on the upper end of the risk to reoffend and is less amenable to treatment... adding that he was diagnosed as a pedophile. She argued that his status as a Catholic priest is an aggravating factor.”

Given that Faucher is 73 years old and, according to his defense team, in ill health suffering from brain damage and alcohol-induced dementia, it is clear that the former priest will die in prison.

Prosecutors: Baby found in woods had meth in his system

BEND (AP) — Prosecutors say the 13-month-old boy who was abandoned in the woods of Central Oregon had a broken leg, a skull fracture, and methamphetamine in his system.

The Bulletin reports prosecutors released details of the baby’s condition at a hearing Wednesday in Deschutes County Circuit Court, arguing to increase the bond for 26-year-old Brandon Blouin, the boy’s father.

Blouin was indicted earlier this year on charges that include abandonment of a child, custodial interference, child neglect and endangering the welfare of a minor.

A Deschutes County detective found the baby naked and alone for hours in the woods near Bend in May.

Investigators say the boy had been taken from his legal guardian in Parkersburg, West Virginia.

The judge increased Blouin’s bond to \$500,000. His trial is scheduled for April.

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