

Reflection Questions

- What actions have you taken that guide your faith and support your personal recovery?

- Reflect upon how your faith has been complicated and/or supported by religious tradition and law.
 - Has this changed since you've surrendered yourself to the process of recovery?

 - What traditions or devotions bring you closer to knowing Christ and acting upon his will for you?

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time



The Catholic Church is full of rich tradition and history, much of which has its roots in ancient Judaism. Finding balance between Truth and tradition can be difficult for some today and has been an ongoing challenge that Jesus confronted during his time. When called out by Pharisees and scribes for the impurity of his disciples, Jesus notes their hypocrisy and responds by citing the prophet Isaiah:

*This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines human precepts.
You disregard God's commandment but cling
to human tradition.*

Bishop Robert Barron likens the law—religious tradition put into formal guidelines—to a suit of armor used to protect a soldier in battle. When that armor gets too heavy and burdensome, it weighs him down and leaves him more vulnerable to attack. The same can be said of our spiritual development in recovery and increased commitment to the sacraments. “We love the law, but we don’t allow the law to stifle the essence of our spiritual life,” Bishop Barron notes.

The beauty of coming to know Christ through our own personal recovery is found in the authentic desire for a savior. We recognize that we cannot cure those we love, although our desperation for change has a tendency to cut through human complication and focus our energy on cultivating new life in Christ. We have come to find that lip service alone leaves us disappointed and empty. Faith and recovery demand that we get into action and put our belief to work.

This week’s second reading calls our attention to the grace that God has granted us and our response as faithful Christians. Over the next five weeks, the Church will explore the Letter of James, a favorite among the pioneers of twelve step recovery. This week’s passage instructs the course of our recovery, beginning with an acknowledgment of the gift we’ve been given:

*All good giving and every perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father of lights,
with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused
by change.
He willed to give us birth by the word of truth
that we may be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

We put our trust in the Word of God and seek to know and do His will through a variety of ways. Cultivating our faith is an important starting point and can be done by pursuing steps one, two, and three (admitting our powerlessness and unmanageability of life run on our own, coming to believe God can restore us to sanity, and deciding to turn our will and life over to His care). James continues by commanding:

*Humbly welcome the word that has been
planted in you
and is able to save your souls.
Be doers of the word and not hearers only,
deceiving yourselves.*

Our reception of God’s word is not our end point but rather propels us into action. We rely on God and others to help conduct our own personal moral inventory, an action that moves us into reconciliation and restoration. Along the journey, we are given opportunity to appreciate how law and tradition can protect the freedom afforded to us by Christ.