

Reflection Questions

- What is the cross that you carry and how have you shared the weight of it with others?
- Is there an aspect of your life that you may be avoiding and attempting to deny?
- What types of resistance are you running into along your recovery journey?

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Our recovery journey brings along many gifts, including the gift of identity. We get the chance to learn who God is, who we are (not God), and identify our cross—that thorn in our side which propels us to face resistance with courage. When we recognize them, our addictions and unhealthy attachments can catapult us into an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ through the sacraments and twelve steps.

Unfortunately, the cunning, baffling, and powerful nature of addiction can prevent us from acknowledging that change needs to begin with us. Systems of denial keep us from linking the consequences of our actions to our own self-absorbed behavior. We journey together so that we can enhance and encourage each other's recovery. This allows us to see aspects of our own lives through the lives of our brothers as well as through the Gospel stories of Jesus.

In this coming Sunday's Mass readings, we hear Christ speak to the willing attitude necessary to follow him. The first half of this week's Gospel (Mark 8:27-35) reflects upon Peter wishing an easier, softer way for Christ:

*He began to teach them
that the Son of Man must suffer greatly
and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and
the scribes,
and be killed, and rise after three days.
He spoke this openly.
Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke
him.
At this he turned around and, looking at his
disciples,
rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan.
You are thinking not as God does, but as human
beings do."*

In addition to self-denial, we may also run up against others who plead for us to minimize the impact of our addictive behavior. This can be found on a cultural level as masturbation and pornography use are becoming more-and-more socially acceptable regardless of their emotional, physical, social, and spiritual consequences. Furthermore, sometimes family members or friends have a difficult time understanding the great lengths we go to in order to get sober or find abstinence.

In this instance, Christ did not allow the influence of Peter to direct his mission. He was steadfast in his efforts to give fully of himself. When we walk the path of suffering love in our recovery from pornography and sex addiction, we are sure to meet resistance just as Jesus did. Humans have a tendency to seek safety, comfort, and avoidance of pain. Peter wants to believe that the Christian life can be lived without the cross.

Christ's response seems harsh, but is a request for Peter to follow Him. In reality, Jesus is laying out the cost of discipleship:

*He summoned the crowd with his disciples and
said to them,
"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny
himself,
take up his cross, and follow me.
For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for my sake
and that of the gospel will save it."*

We must freely walk the path of suffering love if we are to be His followers. The path of protection and safety has its own costs, specifically the compromise of our soul and the loss of the person whom God wants us to become. Upon leaning into the spiritual work of recovery, we march together with Christ toward Jerusalem. Along the way, we are sure to meet those who will distract us, as well as those we can invite into the parade.