

Reflection Questions

- How have you used addictive behaviors and attachments to cope with challenging circumstances in your life?
 - What were the benefits and costs?

- How do you respond to discipline?

- What valuable spiritual tools have you added to your toolkit in recovery?
 - When do you use them?

More Resources Available Online!

Find helpful articles that will strengthen your faith and recovery journey by visiting www.catholicinrecovery.com.

At least once per week, we share articles on a variety of topics, including personal stories, education, and reflections related to the 12 steps and the sacramental life of the Catholic Church.

Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: Isaiah 66:18-21

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117:1, 2

2nd Reading: Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

Gospel: Luke 13:22-30

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time



Remaining on the path of recovery is not always easy. Our old patterns of coping have come with great consequences, and we are awoken to a new way of life. In recovery, the circumstances around us do not necessarily change, although our ability to adapt to the world around us improves as we surrender our will and life over to the care of God.

We are being formed and strengthened by God. We are given a set of spiritual tools which arm us for whatever challenges may come. However, there may be some growing pains. Without our various addictions and unhealthy attachments to turn to, we are forced to deal with fear, emotional unrest, and agitation head on. Seeking experience, strength, and hope from others who have endured the journey before us can be valuable along the way.

This week's Second Reading speaks directly to the perceived pain of spiritual progress—a significant shift from our undisciplined ways of old:

*Endure your trials as "discipline";
God treats you as sons.
For what "son" is there whom his father does not discipline?
At the time,
all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain,
yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness
to those who are trained by it.*

*So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees.
Make straight paths for your feet,
that what is lame may not be disjointed but healed.*

Instead of blindly following every urge and craving, we pause and invite God to guide our decision-making. Oftentimes, this means building the courage to see how our self-centered attitudes and behaviors effect others. Pain comes from recognizing the truth that our actions impact those we care the most about. Fortunately, the 12 steps provide an avenue of healing for ourselves and others. Each step is critical to building our spiritual toolkit, beginning with assessing and accepting the natural consequences of our actions.

Natural consequences tend to be mistaken as a punishment from God. It is wise to recognize the difference. God does not enable behavior that separates us from Him by simply letting us off the hook. Instead, he gives us the opportunity to learn from the experience so that we may know peace.

Like a parent practicing tough love, God allows us to know the pain of our addictive behavior so that we may return to the love He freely offers. In the past, we have avoided knowing this pain by fleeing back to the source of our pain—a cycle which digs us further into the darkness of addiction and attachment. We reach *rock bottom* when we choose to stop digging our own hole and seek the light above.

"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough," Jesus says to a crowd in this week's Gospel reading. This can be challenging to hear, although we prepare ourselves to enter the gate each time we work the 12-steps, reach out for support, pause and ask God for direction, choose to sit with uncomfortable emotions, spend time reading scripture and recovery literature, or contact a new group member.

As a good Father, God allows His children to experience discipline. It may take time to recognize discipline as beneficial. If we can find the humility to be strengthened and formed by it, God will convert pain into freedom, joy, and purpose.