

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time



The author of the Letter to the Hebrews writes, "The word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). This is especially true for those of us actively pursuing recovery from addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments, one day at a time. As we move through the liturgical calendar, we find certain passages penetrating our soul in particularly effective ways. This might also be true of recovery literature that reaches us in new ways each time we read it.

This Sunday's first reading begins with a valuable warning: "Woe to the complacent in Zion!" (Amos 6:1) While freedom from the isolating and dark effects of addiction might bring about new comforts and privileges, we must be sure that they do not keep us from continuing to live a lifestyle rooted in service and recovery.

Many of us have experienced some sort of *rock bottom*. Having been offered a second chance through recovery, we swear that we will never forget where we've been and have no intention of going back. However, our condition is cunning, baffling, powerful, and patient. It's said that we have a "built-in forgetter" which makes it hard to recall the damage caused by untreated addictions and compulsions, especially as life becomes more comfortable.

Good intentions do not guarantee long-term positive action. Therefore, we make a daily commitment to practice the principles of the Twelve Steps in all our affairs. In this Sunday's Second Reading, Saint Paul urges us to, "Pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:11). Working with others who are new to recovery keeps our memory fresh, fosters gratitude, and maintains devotion to our own recovery as we share what we have freely received.

If we find ourselves in pursuit of comfort and the opportunity to take it easy, it is wise to do so with priority given to our spiritual life. We pray to be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever in the next. A tale of two deaths are described by Jesus in this Sunday's Gospel reading (Luke 16:19-21):

"There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores."

The fate of the Rich Man and Lazarus are not surprising as we consider the mind and heart of Jesus. As his mother declared to Elizabeth upon her visitation, "The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty" (Luke 1:53).

Jesus continues the story: "When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side" (Luke 16:22-23).

As expected, the Rich Man pleads for mercy and another chance. At the very least, he would like Lazarus to return to the house of his family to warn those who are still alive. "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead," Abraham replies (Luke 16:31).

Having had a spiritual awakening, our mission is to provide an account of our past and the hope of recovery so that others may benefit from our experience. If we are not yet in a place to share the good news, we can begin with transparency and a willingness to encounter our Lord, who makes all things new.

Reflection Questions

- How do you draw inspiration and guidance from scripture, recovery literature, or spiritual reading?
- What helps you keep from being complacent with your recovery and spiritual progress?
- How do you go about carrying the message of recovery to others?

Living the Steps Begins October 1

Join the Catholic in Recovery community as we journey together through the Twelve Steps

- Gatherings will take place via Zoom Wednesday mornings at 9:00a ET/6:00a PT for 22 weeks (ending March 11)
- Work through the Twelve Steps of recovery integrating Catholic faith using *The Catholic in Recovery Workbook*
- Small group breakouts based on addiction type and gender
- Visit catholicinrecovery.com/livingthesteps to learn more and register

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Amos 6:1a, 4-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 146:7, 8-9, 9-10

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 6:11-16

Gospel: Luke 16:19-31