

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Saint Francis de Sales uses a powerful metaphor to describe our spiritual needs as people in recovery. While he draws this comparison to sexual chastity, the same is true of our experience with any addiction, compulsion, or unhealthy attachment:

"So long as fruits are undamaged they may be preserved, some in straw, some in sand, and some in their own leaves; but when they are once bruised, it is almost impossible to keep them but with honey and sugar in conserves: in like manner purity which has never been wounded or violated can be kept in many ways, but when it has once been impaired, nothing can conserve it but an excellent devotion, which, as I have often said, is the true spiritual honey and sugar" (*Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part III, Chapter 12).

Recovery literature describes something similar by noting, "At a certain point in the drinking of every alcoholic, he passes into a state where the most powerful desire to stop drinking is of absolutely no avail" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 24). Once bruised, we needed something sweeter, stronger, and greater than ourselves—devotion to God, expressed through faith, service, and spiritual fellowship.

This Sunday's first reading captures the need for surrender through the healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5:14–15):

*Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times
at the word of Elisha, the man of God.
His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child,
and he was clean of his leprosy.
Naaman returned with his whole retinue to the man of God.
On his arrival he stood before Elisha and said,
"Now I know that there is no God in all the earth,
except in Israel.
Please accept a gift from your servant."*

Naaman's cleansing foreshadows baptism—an outward act of surrender that leads to new life. Step 1 echoes this same reality: we admit we are powerless and plunge ourselves into God's mercy. Yet, like Naaman, many of us resisted at first. Some needed only a few failed attempts before yielding to God's will, while others had to be "mangled" by repeated defeat before they were ready to surrender. In every case, true healing came when we acknowledged our bruised condition and cooperated with God's grace.

This same truth shines in the Gospel story where Jesus heals ten lepers, but only one returns in gratitude (Luke 17:11–19):

One of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him.

He was a Samaritan.

Jesus said in reply, “Ten were cleansed, were they not?”

Where are the other nine?

Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”

Then he said to him, “Stand up and go; your faith has saved you.”

Like the nine who failed to return, we can easily forget the Source of our healing. Sobriety or freedom may come, but without gratitude and devotion—the “honey and sugar” of the Spirit—our recovery spoils. Only when we return to God in thanksgiving, day after day, do we remain in the light. Gratitude turns temporary relief into lasting transformation.

In recovery, this gratitude is expressed through unity, service, and sharing what we’ve freely received. The bruised fruit of our past is preserved not by hiding it, but by placing it into God’s hands and letting Him sweeten it with His mercy. By giving testimony of His healing work in us, we both protect our own recovery and extend hope to those still suffering.

Reflection Questions

- How do you relate to Saint Francis de Sales' metaphor of bruised fruit and the need for true spiritual honey and sugar?
- What does Naaman’s plunge into the Jordan teach you about surrender and baptism-like renewal?
- How does gratitude keep your recovery fresh, like the Samaritan leper who returned to thank Jesus?

CIR Retreats Happening this Fall

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- 1-day retreat in Jensen Beach, FL on November 8
- Find inspiration, guidance, and encouragement through testimonies, workshops, CIR meetings, sacraments, reflection time, and recovery fellowship
- Find more information and register today at catholicinrecovery.com/events

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: 2 Kings 5:14-17

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

Gospel: Luke 17:11-19