

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time



As we near the end of the liturgical year and approach the Solemnity of Christ the King, the Church turns our attention toward the end times and the coming fulfillment of God's Kingdom. The readings this Sunday are apocalyptic in tone, urging us toward patient endurance and steady faith. They remind us that no matter how uncertain or chaotic the world becomes, God remains faithful to His promises.

Apocalyptic writings can seem alarming at first—they describe upheaval, judgment, and purification. Yet their deeper purpose is to offer hope to those enduring hardship. They remind suffering people that God is near, working even when the world feels dark or disordered. For those of us in recovery, this message resonates profoundly. When addiction ruled our lives, it often felt as though the world itself were collapsing. Yet what appeared to be an ending became, by God's grace, a beginning—a new creation.

Like medicine, these readings can be powerful if taken as directed. But if misused—if read through fear or self-centeredness—they can lead to spiritual restlessness. The same happens when we lose sight of spiritual balance in recovery. If we dwell on control, chaos, or resentment, our fears multiply. But when we focus on grace, surrender, and service, we experience healing. The direction of our attention determines the condition of our hearts.

Saint Paul offers a practical antidote to this anxiety in this Sunday's second reading (2 Thessalonians 3:7-12):

*You know how one must imitate us.
For we did not act in a disorderly way among you...
Rather, we wanted to present ourselves as a model
for you,
so that you might imitate us.
In fact, when we were with you,
we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to
work,
neither should that one eat.
We hear that some are conducting themselves among
you in a disorderly way,
by not keeping busy but minding the business of
others.
Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus
Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food.*

Paul's message mirrors the wisdom of recovery: stay grounded in simple, faithful action. He warns against becoming idle or entangled in the affairs of others—what we might call “taking other people’s inventory.” Instead, we are invited to work quietly on our own spiritual growth, living by principle rather than distraction.

The Twelve Steps guide us along a similar path. Those unwilling to do the work of recovery—daily self-examination, prayer, service, and honest accountability—often drift into disorder, frustration, or self-pity. As Paul notes, real spiritual progress happens through consistent effort, not quick fixes. The work we do between meetings—prayer, inventory, amends, and acts of service—is where the grace of transformation takes root.

Faithful work, whether in recovery or in our daily responsibilities, is both sanctifying and healing. When we do our part with humility and gratitude, we participate in God's ongoing creation. As we cooperate with His will, we find meaning and joy even in small tasks. Recovery gives us the eyes to see that our labor—spiritual, emotional, or physical—is not in vain.

This season of the Church year reminds us to stay awake, stay patient, and stay grounded. The Kingdom of God unfolds quietly in the faithful work of ordinary people who persevere through trial with hope. When we trust that God is in charge and tend to our own work, we find both freedom and peace, one day at a time.

Reflection Questions

- What does it mean for you to remain rooted in the spiritual solution of recovery, and how do you practice that daily?
- When have you been asked to grow in patience, and what did that experience teach you about trust?
- How do you experience joy or peace in doing the daily work of recovery, service, or ordinary labor?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Malachi 3:19-20a

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98:5-6, 7-8, 9

Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

Gospel: Luke 21:5-19