

Reflection Questions

- How have you responded to the service imperative at the heart of 12-step recovery?
 - Remember, never underestimate your ability to help family members who still suffer.
- Do you have any commitments at a weekly meeting or elsewhere in a recovery community?
- How have you benefited from the service of others?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: 2 Samuel 5:1-3

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5

Second Reading: Colossians 1:12-20

Gospel: Luke 23:35-43

Solemnity of Christ the King



We are blessed to experience the hand of Christ active in our day. Helping others who are in need has become a way of life for family members finding freedom from the grip of addiction. This Sunday, we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King as our liturgical calendar winds down. We look with hope for the return of our King as we view the world through the lens of service and sacramental recovery.

Addiction recovery literature emphasizes the urgency with which we must take this approach, speaking to our common solution (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 14 and 15):

"This painful past may be of infinite value to other families still struggling with their problem. We think each family which has been relieved owes something to those who have not, and when the occasion requires, each member of it should be only too willing to bring former mistakes, no matter how grievous, out of their hiding places. Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worth while to us now."

This *service imperative* runs parallel with the message offered by Jesus in this Sunday's Gospel Reading. Since January, most of the Church's liturgical readings have been taken from the Gospel of Luke, which focuses on the desperate and poor. In this case, we witness the faith of a man being executed with Jesus.

Like the tax collector praying in the Temple a few Sundays ago, this criminal utters a short, but profoundly honest, prayer: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." When we launch into the work of recovery, we start to see what Jesus can do as he takes leadership of our lives. Oftentimes, it begins with a humble cry to our Lord in prayer. We can learn much from the exchange between Jesus and two criminals as they are being put to death:

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying,

"Are you not the Christ?

Save yourself and us."

The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply,

"Have you no fear of God,

for you are subject to the same condemnation?

And indeed, we have been condemned justly,

for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes,

but this man has done nothing criminal."

Then he said,

"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

He replied to him,

"Amen, I say to you,

today you will be with me in Paradise."

As attendants of Christ, we are not tasked with fighting or battling. Rather, he is the one who has shed blood for all and invites us to declare the good news to others. As Catholics who have found recovery, this is not only a part of our Christian calling but also essential to our ongoing pursuit of freedom, joy, and happiness.

Perhaps you are in a position where you feel you are most in need—your personal rock bottom. Embrace the hand that reaches out to you and accept your identity as a beloved son or daughter of God, with whom He is well pleased. A new life awaits you—one that you may not be able to envision today.

It is a gift to be in recovery, as few lifestyles offer such genuine opportunities to live under the reign of our Lord. Let us conclude this week's reflection with a prayer of service and thanksgiving (*The Twelve Steps and the Sacraments*, p. 168-169):

Lord,

Thank you for never giving up on your pursuit of me.

Every step of my recovery journey

has been paved by you,

and you have crafted me beautifully.

Please allow me to see the world

through your lens

so that I may be of maximum service to you

and to those around me.

May I do for others what your love has done for me. In

all things, give me a heart that seeks the weary,

the lonely, and the hopeless

so that, one day, we may all be united

in your heavenly kingdom.

Amen.