

Reflection Questions

- How have you responded to the service imperative at the heart of 12-step recovery?
 - Remember, never underestimate your ability to help the addict who still suffers.
- 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 lives. Helping others who are in need has become a way of life for us, even when the needy have self-inflicted wounds. 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):

“Particularly was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. Faith without works was dead, he said. And how appallingly true for the alcoholic! For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed.”

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 freedom, abstinence, and sobriety.

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.