

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Learning to live one day at a time can be just as important for those impacted by a loved one's addiction as it is for those recovering from addiction themselves. When someone we care about struggles with destructive behaviors, it is easy for our thoughts to drift away from the present moment. We replay past hurts and broken promises, or we anxiously imagine what tomorrow might bring. Fear about the future and resentment about the past can quietly drain our peace.

Recovery invites us to return to today. Instead of trying to manage the entire story of someone else's life, we begin focusing on the grace available in this moment. We learn to care for our own spiritual health while entrusting the lives of those we love to God.

The season of Lent encourages us to examine where our hope truly rests. Many family members and friends eventually realize that we placed enormous hope in our ability to fix, persuade, or rescue someone else. We may have tried to manage circumstances so that the chaos would finally stop. Yet no amount of effort could change another person's heart. That realization can feel painful, but it also opens the door to a deeper trust in God.

Saint Paul speaks about the difference between life rooted in the flesh and life rooted in the Spirit in this Sunday's second reading (Romans 8:8-11):

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised

Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit dwelling in you.

Life in the flesh can appear in many forms for those affected by addiction. It might show up as constant worry, attempts to control outcomes, or the belief that we are responsible for another person's choices. These patterns often come from love and concern, yet they can slowly leave us exhausted and spiritually depleted.

The gospel story of Lazarus reminds us that only God has the power to raise someone from the tomb. When Jesus stands before Lazarus' grave, He calls out with authority (John 11:43-44):

He cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go."

Notice that Jesus calls Lazarus out of the tomb, but others are asked to help remove the burial cloths. In recovery communities, we often experience a similar pattern. God begins the work of transformation, and supportive relationships help us live in that freedom.

For family members and friends impacted by a loved one's addiction, this might look like attending meetings, seeking guidance from others who understand, and practicing healthy boundaries. These actions do not control another person's recovery, but they allow us to live with greater serenity and honesty.

Living one day at a time becomes a spiritual practice. Yesterday's wounds cannot be undone, and tomorrow's

outcomes are unknown. But today we can pray, speak truthfully, and choose actions that reflect trust in God.

Christ continues to bring life into situations that appear hopeless. As we walk this path of recovery, we are reminded that our peace does not depend on controlling circumstances but on staying connected to the One who raises the dead.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When have past hurts or future worries pulled your attention away from the grace available in today?

- What does trusting God with your loved one's life look like for you right now?

- Where might God be inviting you to practice healthier boundaries so that you can live with greater serenity?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Ezekiel 37:12-14

RESP. PS. Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

SECOND READING Romans 8:8-11

GOSPEL John 11:1-45

