

Reflection Questions

- How has your relationship with the past changed over the course of your recovery journey?
- How have you found yourself improving in response to life rather than attempting to manage conditions around you?
- How are you called to be of service to others in recovery or in need of recovery?

Experience a CIR Retreat this Year

Connect with fellow Catholics in recovery, hear inspiring testimonies, engage the sacraments, participate in meetings, and renew your recovery

- **March 24-26 - St. Benedict Lodge in McKenzie Bridge, OR**
Note: Early bird discount (\$50 off) ends January 31
- **June 2-4 - Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville, AL**
- **October 13-15 - Spiritual Life Center in Wichita, KS**
- Register online at catholicinrecovery.com/events

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First Reading: Isaiah 58: 7-10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Gospel: Matthew 5:13-16

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time



The suffering we experience amidst the presence of addiction in our family takes a variety of shapes and can be hard to make sense of at times. As we work our own program of recovery, we learn to discern the difference between what we cannot change and that which we can. Additionally, the Twelve Steps give us a method to work through suffering and lingering resentments.

As we grow spiritually while finding new ways to cope with addiction, we begin to see that we are improving in our response to life, even if the conditions around us remain. We stop attempting to manage everything and everyone around us. We are not responsible for another person's disease or recovery from it. Instead, we learn loving detachment to let go of our obsession with another's actions and begin to lead joyful and more manageable lives with dignity and purpose.

Scripture is meant to uncover truths about us, God, and the nature of our relationship. The Bible reveals these truths in an assortment of ways, and this Sunday's First Reading clearly outlines several guiding principles often cited by Jesus:

Thus says the LORD:

*Share your bread with the hungry,
shelter the oppressed and the homeless;
clothe the naked when you see them,
and do not turn your back on your own.
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your wound shall quickly be healed;
your vindication shall go before you,
and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.*

In order to break free from the grip that addiction once had on us, God asks that we look to be of service to others. We have a unique ability to share experience, strength, and hope with those looking for a new way of life because we have been granted the same gift. "Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worth while to us now. Cling to the thought that, in God's hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have—the key to life and happiness for others" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 125).

The Letter to the Hebrews notes the effectiveness of Jesus: "Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested" (2:18). Like those who have helped us along the way, we have instant credibility with individuals who still suffer because we have stood in their shoes and found a way to live freely thanks to the grace of God.

God turns our suffering around, even allowing it to be used as an asset to remain faithful to Him and help others when given the chance. Saint Paul reminds us that we do not need the perfect words as he describes his approach to sharing the light of Christ in this Sunday's Second Reading:

*I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling,
and my message and my proclamation
were not with persuasive words of wisdom,
but with a demonstration of Spirit and power,
so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom
but on the power of God.*

Similarly, Jesus calls us to let our light shine for the world to see. This is not done to boost our ego but to glorify the One who hears the cries of the powerless. As a result of working through the Twelve Steps, we "carry the message" and "practice these principles in all our affairs." Let us allow the words of Jesus to take root within us:

*You are the light of the world.
A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.
Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a
bushel basket;
it is set on a lampstand,
where it gives light to all in the house.
Just so, your light must shine before others,
that they may see your good deeds
and glorify your heavenly Father.*