

Many of us struggle to make sense of the suffering that marked our lives before recovery. Addiction, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments brought visible losses—strained relationships, financial trouble, legal consequences, or damaged health. But some of the deepest suffering was hidden, such as shame we could not name, anxiety we could not quiet, isolation we could not admit, and a constant inner restlessness. As we begin living sober, abstinent, balanced, or free, we slowly see that while we did not choose every wound we carried, we often chose behaviors that kept those wounds open.

The Twelve Steps help us face this truth without being crushed by it. Step One invites us to look honestly at the consequences of our actions. This honesty is not punishment; it is freedom. Denial kept us stuck in cycles that hurt us and others. When we admit powerlessness and unmanageability, we accept that our old solutions no longer work. That surrender, painful at first, becomes a doorway to grace.

As we grow spiritually, we discover that recovery is not only the removal of a behavior but a new way of responding to life. Even when circumstances remain difficult, something in us begins to change. We become less reactive and more grounded. Instead of trying to control every trigger or avoid every discomfort, we learn to meet life as it is. Recovery literature names this shift clearly: “It never occurred to us that we needed to change ourselves to meet conditions, whatever they were” (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 47).

This Sunday’s first reading shows how healing is closely tied to love in action (Isaiah 58:7-10):

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.

Addiction narrows our world until nearly everything revolves around fear, comfort, and cravings. God’s invitation through Isaiah widens our hearts. Healing deepens as we learn to love beyond ourselves. This does not mean neglecting our recovery. It means our recovery becomes less self-absorbed and more God-centered. We share experience, strength, and hope because we have received those gifts ourselves.

The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that suffering can form compassion and usefulness. Because Christ “himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested” (Hebrews 2:18). In recovery, the people who help us most are often those who have walked similar darkness and found light. Over time, we become that person for someone else. Our credibility does not come from having perfect answers but from honesty, humility, and lived experience.

Saint Paul echoes this same humility in this Sunday’s second reading (1 Corinthians 2:3-5):

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.

We do not carry hope through perfect words or flawless lives. God uses sincerity, witness, and willingness. When we show up, speak honestly, and keep practicing the principles, God supplies what we lack.

Finally, Jesus gives us both identity and mission in the Gospel (Matthew 5:14-16):

“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.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When you reflect upon your suffering, where can you see the difference between wounds carried and the behaviors that keep those wounds open?
- Where is God inviting you to change how you respond to life, rather than trying to change the circumstances?
- How has your experience of suffering made you more able to understand or help someone else in recovery?

MASS READINGS

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