

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time



It can be hard to make sense of the suffering we go through before we find help. The suffering we experience from our addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments takes a variety of shapes, and as we work to stay sober, clean, or abstinent, we see that our behavior made it quite self-induced. The Twelve Steps give us a method to work through suffering and resentments. If we work through the First Step, we see the natural consequences of our actions.

As we grow spiritually while finding freedom and sobriety from our addictions, 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 around us that could be triggering. As recovery literature notes, "It never occurred to us that we needed to change ourselves to meet conditions, whatever they were" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 47).

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 self-centered condition of addiction, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments, 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 second chance because we have been granted the same unmerited gift.

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.*

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?

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- **March 24-26 - St. Benedict Lodge in McKenzie Bridge, OR**
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- **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

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

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