

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Upon entering recovery, we hear about a spiritual awakening as the result of working through the Twelve Steps when finding freedom from lust addiction, sexual compulsions, and unhealthy attachments. It is natural for us to then ask what we need to do to make that happen. What we ultimately find is that addiction recovery is not predicated on what we can do but rather on what God can do.

Therefore, the Twelve Steps of recovery and the sacraments of the Catholic Church help us surrendering our ambitions, control, and expectations into the hands of God. We act upon the suggestions of mentors and peers after hearing how God has been working in their lives. Plans and schemes to figure it all out tend to distract us from the work of God and reinforce the prideful attitude from which we seek to be free. For better or worse, we have lost the privilege to negotiate our surrender.

William James offers a concise and accurate description of Steps One, Two, and Three and what the Gospels call *metanoia*. When Jesus began his preaching by telling people to repent, he was inviting a transition from attachment to serenity. James adds that repentance is an experience that feels like a movement "from tenseness, self-responsibility, and worry to equanimity, receptivity, and peace."

"The chief wonder of it," James continues, "is that it so often comes about, not by doing, but by simply relaxing and throwing the burden down." As those of us who have been caught in the grasp of addiction, we've spent years trying hard to do it, to handle it, or to throw our willpower at it. However, *it*—whatever our obsession/compulsion is—just keeps weighing us down, as a yoke does oxen pulling a plow.

Although we are weary and find life burdensome, we continue to insist that we humans—especially ourselves—ought to be more powerful than the things we are attached to, no matter how cunning, baffling, and powerful they might be.

We finally enter recovery when we simply stop trying to run the show. Recovery literature describes, "We have ceased fighting anything or anyone... That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting, neither are we avoiding temptation... Instead, the problem has been removed" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 84-85).

By showing up and engaging the recovery process, we are exercising personal agency and taking responsibility for the behavior that has gotten us here. At some point, we may even give up hope on having a better past and, instead, focus our efforts on living today successfully.

We need to undergo a metanoia—or change of heart—before we can fully grasp how power is going to be exercised in the recovery process. A good way to start is by admitting we are powerless over our lust, pornography, and sexual addictions and that our lives had become unmanageable. This paints a clear picture of the insanity which once ruled our lives and propels us to believe that we can be restored through God.

This Sunday's Gospel Reading is Jesus Christ's invitation to restoration:

*“Come to me, all you who
labor and are burdened,
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for yourselves.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”*

Reflection Questions

- How have you surrendered to God through addiction recovery and what lessons have you learned through the process of letting go?
- What burdens drove you to seek recovery and what new tools do you have to deal with them today?
- How have you been restored through God?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Zechariah 9:9-10

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14

Second Reading: Romans 8:9, 11-13

Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30