

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



There are many slogans found in the rooms of 12-step recovery, both hanging on the walls and coming from the mouths of wise old-timers. At first, these might seem trite and too simplistic to be applied to our complex lives and minds. If you've been around long enough, many of these are likely familiar:

- "Live and let live"
- "Let go and let God"
- "Easy does it"
- "One day at a time"
- "Progress, not perfection"
- "First things first"

We are told in this Sunday's Second Reading that God is "the one who searches hearts" and that He "knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will." Therefore, it is not our job to make judgments of others or to determine who will succeed in recovery and who will not.

We might tend to unfairly compare our insides with other peoples' outsides. As a result, we sometimes believe or behave as if we are either morally inferior or superior to what we see of another person. It is important to remember that the presence of an addiction, compulsion, or unhealthy attachment is not a moral referendum on one's family. It certainly does not include us among the weeds as we hear in this Sunday's Gospel Reading:

Jesus proposed another parable to the crowds, saying:

"The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off.

When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well.

The slaves of the householder came to him and said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field?

Where have the weeds come from?'

He answered, 'An enemy has done this.'

His slaves said to him,

'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them.

Let them grow together until harvest;

then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters,

"First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning;

but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

This parable asserts that weeds and wheat are so close together that it doesn't make sense to try to sort them out. Such matters are best left to the Lord of the harvest and are best done in His time. A better alternative might be found in one of the simple 12-step slogans—"live and let live" or "let go and let God."

Jesus, who as God's beloved Son presumably really knew other peoples' insides, made a point of spending time with people who had the least polished outsides: prostitutes, lepers, tax collectors, and adulterers. We must not forget the mercy we've needed and received as we recall the conditions which brought us to seek recovery.

If we abandon any memory of our past, we can be of no use to the newcomer seeking hope. God is not finished with our spiritual development, and new revelations will come if we stay committed to doing the "next indicated thing." Thus, our formula for recovery can be broken down into one final slogan: "Clean house, trust God, help others."

Reflection Questions

- What slogans have been helpful to you in moments along your recovery journey?
 - How were they presented to you?
- What spiritual tools or encouraging words have helped you deal with the temptation to compare yourself to others?
- What does doing the "next indicated thing" mean to you?

Finding Freedom Through the Twelve Steps

Join the Catholic in Recovery community for a webinar on the fruits of working the Twelve Steps

Tuesday, July 25 at 8p ET/5p PT

- **Experience, strength, and hope** shared for anyone interested in working the Twelve Steps or those who have questions as to getting started
- **Panel discussion** among CIR members with recovery experience related to alcohol/drugs, food, lust, and family
- **CIR+ Members can register today** at my.catholicinrecovery.com/webinar-signup/

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

Second Reading: Romans 8:26-27

Gospel: Matthew 13:24-43