

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Picking up on last week's reflection theme of slogans, this Sunday's Liturgy of the Word affirms the line in Chapter 5: How It Works of the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous* — “half-measures avail us nothing” (p. 59). This phrase describes that in order to find freedom from addictions, compulsions, or unhealthy attachments, we must be all in. In recovery, we make a day-at-a-time commitment to discovering and maintaining a new way of life, which is no different than the converted Christian who is now armed with a new spiritual understanding and fellowship that will support them along their path.

In yet another set of parables, Jesus stresses the urgency of holding on to the treasure given to us by God. In this Sunday's Gospel Reading we hear:

*"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field,
which a person finds and hides again,
and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys
that field.*

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant
searching for fine pearls.*

*When he finds a pearl of great price,
he goes and sells all that he has and buys it."*

Both the Twelve Steps of addiction recovery and the gospel of Jesus Christ hinge upon some kind of spiritual awakening. It can be very useful to reflect upon the circumstances that led to our conversion. For some, this awakening took place in a confined, miraculous moment. Others may have experienced a gradual progression of spiritual understanding. Regardless, it is not to be taken for granted and the new sight we're given needs to be continually re-calibrated.

Addiction recovery focuses our efforts on what we can do today to participate in God's grace. In the first few days and weeks of this journey, that grace reveals itself in staving off the temptation and urge to drink, use drugs, act out lustfully, binge or restrict food, make one more wager, exert control, or indulge in other addictive and compulsive behaviors. As that obsession fades and we put on the armor of God, our commitment to recovery is revealed through finding a home group, working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor, and engaging the sacraments of the Catholic Church.

Surrender, prayer, honesty, righting wrongs, and helping others is the formula used to maintain a newly-found God consciousness. What is God consciousness? Jesus suggests it means selling all that you have to invest in a rare pearl that required some deep-diving to find. It can be understood as a heart that continues to desire interior conversion.

Challenges are sure to meet us as we stay engaged in the spiritual life. When they do, we seek grace rather than results. When we pray the Serenity Prayer, we do not ask for acceptance, change, and knowledge. Instead, we humbly request the serenity, courage, and wisdom to handle situations which used to baffle us. This provides an opportunity, once more, to express our intentions of “Thy will, not mine, be done.”

A Christ-centered life brings infinite blessings. Rather than seeing our quality of life as a condition of circumstances and situations around us, we begin turning inward and see that the quality of circumstances around us is typically dependent upon our ability to invite God into the situation. Addiction recovery gives us the hope, encouragement, and direction to commit ourselves to God's will one day at a time.

Reflection Questions

- What has been your experience with a spiritual awakening?
- How do you maintain a daily commitment to recovery and a spiritual way of life?
- If you've worked through the Steps, how can you relate to the Ninth Step promise that *we will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us*?

Living the Steps Meeting Coming Soon!

*Join the Catholic in Recovery community
as we journey together through the Twelve Steps*

- Meeting will be held Tuesday nights at 8:00p ET/ 5:00p PT beginning August 15 and ending January 2024
- Participate with others to work through the Twelve steps of recovery through a sacramental lens
- We will use *The Catholic in Recovery Workbook* as a guide
- Small group breakouts based on addiction type and gender
- Registration information coming next week

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-130

Second Reading: Romans 8:28-30

Gospel: Matthew 13:44-52