

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time



As people in recovery, we have experienced life on the spiritual fringes. Thankfully, we have been raised up by God who is full of mercy and love for the lowly. Every August, we celebrate back-to-back feast days of people who know much about life on the fringes: Saint Maximilian Kolbe (August 14) and the Assumption of Mary (August 15). Turning first to our Blessed Mother, the Gospel Reading for her special holy day describes Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth, who was pregnant. Elizabeth greeted Mary:

*"Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
And how does this happen to me,
that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For
at the moment the sound of your greeting reached
my ears,
the infant in my womb leaped for joy.
Blessed are you who believed
that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be
fulfilled."*

As we honor the Assumption of Mary, we celebrate that the mother of Jesus was raised by God's side in proportion to her humility and shown by her acceptance of God's will. Mary responded to Elizabeth:

*"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm,
and has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever."*

Mary is the model of humility. We can look to her and see the virtue sought by working through the Twelve Steps of addiction recovery. We can be raised regardless of how far we have fallen, and we greet each other with honor and respect when we put aside our self-absorption to step into the shoes of a new group member or someone reaching out for help.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe, the patron saint of drug addicts, families, and prisoners, maintained a strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary after being greeted by her in a vision at the age of 12. He recalled, "That night I asked the Mother of God what was to become of me. Then she came to me holding two crowns, one white, the other red. She asked me if I was willing to accept either of these crowns. The white one meant that I should persevere in purity, and the red that I should become a martyr. I said that I would accept them both."

This dedication to doing God's will is an example for each of us to maintain an open mind and heart. Saint Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish priest, spent much of his life serving those under siege by the German army in World War II. He ultimately died in a concentration camp upon voluntarily replacing a man with a family who was sentenced to death by starvation (he did not die naturally and had to be lethally injected). Kolbe died on August 14, 1941 and was cremated the next day, the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary. Both he and Mary teach us to accept God's will and remain open to His grace, no matter how treacherous it may seem.

Addiction recovery literature is consistent with this principle and offers hope: "When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 100).

Reflection Questions

- Recall and describe how you have been greeted and welcomed by people in recovery.
- How do the examples of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Maximilian Kolbe influence your recovery and trust in God's will?
- Who has been a model of humility and acceptance to you along your recovery journey? What have you learned from them?

The Power of Sponsorship in Recovery

Join the CIR community on Wednesday, August 23 for our next webinar on the topic of sponsorship

- Two CIR members with long-term recovery will be sharing experience, strength, and hope related to sponsorship
- Learn about the role of sponsorship in recovery and get answers to common questions such as how to find one
- Webinar will be held at 8p ET/5p PT on August 23
- Participants must be enrolled in CIR+ (Free or Premium)
- Get more info and register at my.catholicinrecovery.com/webinar/the-power-of-sponsorship-in-recovery

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

Second Reading: Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28