

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time



Finding freedom and wellness from the family spiritual disease of addiction requires a proper relationship with God. The self-centered and egotistical nature of addiction often impacts us without us realizing it. Therefore, it is crucial to be willing to follow the direction of God and others who have found freedom. If we do not pursue spiritual progress, an unhealthy reliance on self can subtly make a return and threaten to steal the peace and freedom promised by the Twelve Steps.

Pope Francis summarized the slow fade away from a life of true faith and warns us of indifference: "The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, p. 2).

Put simply, we need stop playing the role of god. A thorough First Step helps us realize the troubles that came when we managed our own lives and the lives of others. We were truly powerless over the addiction. In Step Two, we focus on shifting power into the hands of God. Saint Paul describes that He is much more qualified to direct our lives than we are in Sunday's Second Reading:

*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways!
For who has known the mind of the Lord
or who has been his counselor?
Or who has given the Lord anything
that he may be repaid?
For from him and through him and for him are all things.
To him be glory forever. Amen.*

Intellectually, we may have come to recognize God's role in creation and salvation. In practice, turning our will and our lives over to the care of God requires trust, faith, and perhaps a re-imagined relationship with our Creator.

A variety of factors can play a role in the relationship that we have with our Eternal Father. Our experience with earthly authorities can mold our understanding of God and how He is involved in our lives. Social factors, personal expectations, cultural norms, and other encounters contribute as well.

Before we exercise turning our will over to God, we must first come to believe that God, through the saving power of Jesus Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit, can restore us to sanity. Even Saint Paul reached aspects of God that he couldn't completely wrap his head around. Not having all the answers, he simply stated his marvel for the Lord. We tend to want to know it all before putting faith into something. In the world created by God, that is simply not possible. Our attempts to have it all figured out are, in some way, efforts to be the god of our own lives.

Saint Augustine wrote about this urging, "Seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand" (Tractate 29). In recovery, developing a relationship with God often begins with a desperate plea for change and an acknowledgment that we need to do something different.

Augustine also noted, "To prolong prayer is to have the heart throbbing with continued pious emotion towards Him to whom we pray. For in most cases prayer consists more in groaning than in speaking, in tears rather than in words. But He set our tears in His sight, and our groaning is not hidden from Him who made all things by the word, and does not need human words."

We do not need the right words nor do we need to meet certain requirements before entering into a deeper relationship with God. Our belief leads to understanding. We can delight in announcing "To Him be glory forever!" as we bend our will toward His.

Reflection Questions

- How have you attempted to play the role of God? How has that worked out for you?
- What factors have influenced your relationship with God and your willingness to turn your life over to Him?
- What motivates you to remain committed to recovery and a spiritual way of life?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Isaiah 22:19-23

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

Second Reading: Romans 11:33-36

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20