TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Loving someone affected by addiction can make sacrifice feel familiar. We lose sleep, rearrange plans, absorb consequences, and keep hoping our efforts will help. Yet Sunday's gospel asks us to distinguish the cross Christ gives us from burdens we were never meant to carry. When Jesus speaks of His coming suffering, death, and resurrection, Peter pulls Him aside and objects (Matthew 16:21–27). He wants the promise of salvation without the painful road that leads to it. We also want healing, peace, and restored relationships while perhaps resisting some of the changes family recovery requires.

Jesus responds by telling His disciples, *"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me"* (Matthew 16:24). These words need to be understood carefully. Taking up our cross does not mean tolerating abuse, accepting chaos without limits, or carrying responsibilities that belong to someone else. It does not require us to rescue a loved one from every consequence. The cross Christ gives us is never permission for another person to mistreat us.

For family members and friends, the cross of recovery often involves releasing control. We may need to stop monitoring another person's every move, repeating advice that has already been rejected, covering up consequences, or organizing our lives around the next crisis. We may have to set a boundary that disappoints someone we love, step back from an argument, or allow another person to experience the results of their choices. These actions can feel harsh when we have confused love with rescuing.

Like Peter, we may want resurrection without surrender. We want our loved one to recover without changing the patterns that have formed in us. We want peace while continuing to check, manage, lecture, or overfunction. We may want trust restored before there has been enough time and consistent action to make trust reasonable. Family recovery asks us to accept that our healing also carries a cost.

Saint Paul gives that surrender a practical shape in this Sunday's second reading. He urges us to *"offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God"* and to *"be transformed by the renewal of your mind"* (Romans 12:1–2). We offer God our attention, reactions, schedules, conversations, and expectations. We allow Him to renew the belief that everything depends on us. Step Three becomes concrete as we place both our loved one and ourselves into God's care.

The first reading acknowledges how difficult fidelity can become. Jeremiah grows weary because speaking the truth has brought ridicule and pain. Yet God's word remains *"like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones"* (Jeremiah 20:9). Once we have begun seeing addiction and family dysfunction clearly, returning comfortably to denial becomes difficult. We may miss the temporary calm that came from avoiding conflict, but we also know the cost of silence, enabling, and self-abandonment.

Taking up our cross can mean choosing honesty over appearances, boundaries over resentment, and prayer over obsession. It can mean grieving what we cannot change while remaining open to what God can restore. We do not have to become cold or detached from love. We are learning to love without trying to become another person's savior.

The cross is not evidence that family recovery has failed. It may be the place where fear, control, and unhealthy responsibility begin losing their hold. Christ remains with us as we release burdens that were never ours and accept the responsibilities that are. Following Him costs something, but losing ourselves in another person's addiction costs far more. In His hands, surrender becomes a path toward peace, clarity, and a freer way of loving.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Which burden connected to another person's addiction have you been carrying as though it belongs to you?
- Where have you confused loving someone with rescuing, monitoring, or protecting them from consequences?
- What boundary or act of surrender might help you love more freely and truthfully?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Jeremiah 20:7-9
RESP. PS. Psalm 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9
SECOND READING Romans 12:1-2
GOSPEL Matthew 16:21-27

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