

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Those of us with addictive and compulsive tendencies often struggle with the concept of enough. One characteristic of our shared condition is that when we engage in even moderately lustful behaviors and attitudes, it brings about a craving that demands more. We were never satisfied (the word *satis* is Latin for "enough"). Recovery literature generalizes our experience by noting, "Never was there enough of what we thought we wanted" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 71).

We hear the prophet Isaiah warn against addictions, compulsions, and attachments in this Sunday's First Reading. He urges us to stop wasting resources and time on things that "fail to satisfy" while pointing out that the things which sustain our soul can be found without a price tag:

*Thus says the Lord:
All you who are thirsty, come to the water!
You who have no money,
come, receive grain and eat;
Come, without paying and without cost,
drink wine and milk!
Why spend your money for what is not bread;
your wages for what fails to satisfy?
Heed me, and you shall eat well,
you shall delight in rich fare.
Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life.
I will renew with you the everlasting covenant,
the benefits assured to David.*

We may have questions about how to practice this in our daily recovery efforts. What does it mean to *heed* the Lord? Last week we reflected on the importance of living life with a God consciousness. This similarly asks that we pay attention to God in all matters, big and small. Observing and obeying the Lord establishes a foundation where all of our needs are met and there is plenty left over to give away.

Close connection with others is a great way to encounter the body of Christ. Likewise, the sacraments of the Church are designed to heal, form community, forgive, bring humility, offer hope, and help establish right order in our lives. Countless experiences with the Eucharist have alleviated the destruction caused by sin—pride, envy, shame, and fear. It can be valuable to consider how other sacraments nourish our soul and bring new life.

Jesus brings the prophet's message to life in this Sunday's Gospel Reading as he heals and satisfies the large crowd growing around him:

*When it was evening,
the disciples approached him and said,
“This is a deserted place and it is already late;
dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages
and buy food for themselves.”
Jesus said to them, “There is no need for them to go
away; give them some food yourselves.”
But they said to him,
“Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.”
Then he said, “Bring them here to me,”
and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass.
Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking
up to heaven,
he said the blessing, broke the loaves,
and gave them to the disciples,
who in turn gave them to the crowds.
They all ate and were satisfied,
and they picked up the fragments left over—twelve
wicker baskets full.
Those who ate were about five thousand men,
not counting women and children.*

Recovery works the same way. We tend to enter with little hope and much concern that life will no longer satisfy us—there will never be enough. Upon heeding a few simple suggestions, we find an abundance of joy, freedom, and all the things that make life worth while. Sharing the leftovers (or *carrying this message to others*) makes life meaningful and turns our dark past into a valuable asset to serve others.

Reflection Questions

- Recall and share about how you previously sought satisfaction through lustful behaviors and sexual compulsions. Was there enough?
- How have you found contentment through the Twelve Steps and the sacraments?
- How do you share the "leftover fragments" provided by Jesus?

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 link coming via CIR monthly newsletter

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Isaiah 55:1-3

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 145:8-9, 15-16, 17-18

Second Reading: Romans 8:35, 37-39

Gospel: Matthew 14:13-21