

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Psalm 23, often referenced during times of grief and loss, sets the tone for this Sunday's Mass readings. It reminds us that we are fully equipped to handle life's challenges when we walk the path of the Lord. Even amid temptation and uncertainty, we can rely upon God's protection. Hear this Sunday's Responsorial Psalm:

*The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along right paths
for the sake of his name.
Even though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff comfort me.*

We have been given an invitation to drop our old ways and follow Jesus. Our addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments kept us isolated and lacking hope. We could only tolerate life—the good and the bad—when our obsession was quenched by a substance or behavior. Upon accepting God's invitation, oftentimes in our darkest moment, we are met with a sense of belonging among others who seem to understand.

Last week, we spent time reflecting on the Ninth Step promises and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. This Sunday's Second Reading reinforces St. Paul's message on this theme while acknowledging the value of sharing experience, strength, and hope:

*I know how to live in humble circumstances;
I know also how to live with abundance.
In every circumstance and in all things
I have learned the secret of being well fed and of
going hungry,
of living in abundance and of being in need.
I can do all things in him who strengthens me.
Still, it was kind of you to share in my distress.*

Whether we find ourselves in a time of desolation or abundance, the spiritual principles of 12-step recovery and the traditions of the Church guide us through all seasons. Trusting that He will make all things right takes time, practice, and the support of our fellows. We often find tangible comfort from those who have walked the path before us.

Individuals and family members impacted by addiction have first-hand experience with being powerless. We've wrestled with layers of denial that make it challenging to see the truth from the lies. As darkness ensues, we must reach for the helping hand of God and others to bring us to stable ground. In John's Gospel, Jesus promises, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you" (John 15:7).

We are called to the banquet of the Lord, regardless of our social status or other qualifying factors. God just wants us to show up. Just as we gather from all walks of life in recovery meetings, we should expect to find some unusual and peculiar guests at the Lord's banquet. Jesus enlightens the social and religious elite of his time by telling a parable of a king who throws an extravagant party for his son:

*He said to his servants, 'The feast is ready,
but those who were invited were not worthy to come.
Go out, therefore, into the main roads
and invite to the feast whomever you find.'
The servants went out into the streets
and gathered all they found, bad and good alike,
and the hall was filled with guests.*

Whether facing seasons of joy, sadness, pain, or freedom, the Lord is our shepherd. He finds us, strengthens us, and asks that we do the same for others. We are invited to respond to His call and arrive at His banquet, one day at a time.

Reflection Questions

- Describe how recovery principles help you navigate the natural highs and lows of life?
- What spiritual tools and practices have helped you find peace during challenging times and balance when all seems to be going well?
- What is happening in your life today that demands trust and action?

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- Find more info at catholicinrecovery.com/growth23

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Isaiah 25:6-10a

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

Second Reading: Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14