

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time



A beautiful thing happens when we gather in fellowship united under a common purpose of healing from the family disease of addiction while growing closer to God. There are many things in our world tempting to keep us from this purpose, and we can look to Jesus Christ as our example of keeping distractions away. In this Sunday's Gospel Reading, Jesus' antagonists have set a trap for him:

"Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.

And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status.

Tell us, then, what is your opinion:

Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?"

Jesus is not taken aback by this, as his response steers between the two horns of the dilemma they had set up for him. As we read further, Jesus refuses to take any position in this matter.

Knowing their malice, Jesus said,

"Why are you testing me, you hypocrites?

Show me the coin that pays the census tax."

Then they handed him the Roman coin.

He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?"

They replied, "Caesar's."

At that he said to them,

"Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

From the perspective of Jesus' primary purpose, Caesar just isn't that important. Remaining focused on carrying the message of the kingdom of God is a reality much greater than Caesar's kingdom.

12-step recovery principles take a similar position on political and other questions. These issues must be weighed against our own primary purpose, perhaps revealing how we allow outside issues to distract us from ourselves. Considering our mission, many questions, important in themselves, are irrelevant.

This does not mean that we, as individuals, should have no opinions on "outside issues" when we are outside the confines of a meeting. When we gather for spiritual purposes, however, the emphasis needs to be on what unites us—a common thread of addiction and a common solution—rather on the hundreds of issues on which we might disagree.

To drive this point home, consider the New Testament reading this Sunday. We are beginning a series of readings from Saint Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, which is known to be the first Christian scripture. His opening words upon addressing the church of the Thessalonians are "grace and peace to you." Hear your identity as God's chosen as we read the remaining passage:

*We give thanks to God always for all of you,
remembering you in our prayers,
unceasingly calling to mind your work of faith and
labor of love
and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ,
before our God and Father,
knowing, brothers and sisters loved by God,
how you were chosen.
For our gospel did not come to you in word alone,
but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much
conviction.*

By admitting our powerlessness over alcohol and addiction while finding recovery through the sacramental life of the Church and the Twelve Steps, we've been given the same conviction. We're also promised that we will know peace. Our shared passion, purpose, and peace ought to transcend above the distractions of the world to create an environment where we can grow spiritually.

The word peace was the first greeting of the risen Christ and should characterize the groups that claim to follow him. If Christians and recovering people stick to their primary purpose, with a little grace we can remain at peace.

Reflection Questions

- How would you describe your primary purpose?
- How do you keep outside distractions and the personal opinions of others from diverting your attention away from your primary purpose?
- What environments are most conducive to your spiritual growth and allow you to find peace?

Find Help Overcoming Resentments

Join our empowering webinar "Letting Go & Moving Forward: Resolving Resentments"

- Taking place **Thursday, October 26 at 8p ET/5p PT**
- Resentments have a deadly impact on individuals impacted by addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments
- Participants will learn how to identify, process, and overcome resentments while fostering forgiveness
- Find more info and register today by going to:
my.catholicinrecovery.com/webinar/webinar-signup/

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