

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time



A short, simple phrase is often shared with those in recovery who are having a hard time seeing beyond the fog of shame, fear, and doubt: this too shall pass. We can likely all relate to times when we have been unable to see further than the troubles in front of us in the moment, making it challenging to see the options available to us. When we are obsessing about things beyond our control, we have trouble trusting God or knowing His presence.

The same can also be true when all is going well. We can get caught up in the security and comfort offered by our present circumstances, in which case we can gain humility by recognizing that this, too, shall pass. We now have an ability to deal with life on life's terms and allow God to dictate outcomes.

In this Sunday's Second Reading, we hear Saint Paul offer a similar word to the early Thessalonian Christian community. He recommends we free ourselves of expectations, live in the light of Christ, and commit to sobriety as we prepare for the Lord's coming:

Concerning times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night. When people are saying, "Peace and security," then sudden disaster comes upon them, like labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, for that day to overtake you like a thief. For all of you are children of the light and children of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober.

This suggested one day at a time attitude is commonplace among those who have worked through the Twelve Steps, learned delayed gratification, reconciled relationships, and know the serenity of recovery. Our commitment to spiritual progress requires that we pick up our cross daily, and we don't have to do it alone.

As Saint Paul references, we have known darkness. Some of us may still be living in the darkness while searching desperately for glimmers of light. Those of us who have been given the gift of recovery must not take it for granted. We know darkness and we know light, and we are asked to balance the two in order to be effective at helping others.

Recovery groups and the Catholic Church serve as two pillars that guide us along this journey. We get the opportunity to meet a variety of people with unique backgrounds and experiences as we stay active in both. When merged, the Twelve Steps and the sacraments allow us the grace to stay alert and sober.

Therefore, let us not fall prey to fleeting sources of distress or pleasure. Instead, remain in the Lord to bear much fruit. Opportunities to help others carry their cross will surely come. This is an experience you will not want to miss. Sharing our Master's joy was what we were ultimately seeking in our pursuit of lust, sex, love attachments, and other compulsions.

The Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous* (p. 100) comes to a similar conclusion: "When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!"

Reflection Questions

- Share experience, strength, and hope regarding the phrase "this too shall pass."
- How do you heed the direction of St. Paul by staying sober and alert?
- What helps you live life on life's terms? In other words, have you realized that the things which came to you when you put yourself in God's hands were better than anything you could have planned?

Serenity, Sanity & Sobriety through the Holidays

Live webinar on Tuesday, November 21 at 8p ET/5p PT

- The winter holidays can bring about family tension, heavy expectations, and temptations to return to old patterns
- Panelists will share about dealing with grief and loss; expressing love, gratitude, and faith; coping and celebrating in healthy ways; and how to be a beneficial presence among our families, coworkers, and communities
- Register today at my.catholicinrecovery.com/webinar/webinar-signup/

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Wisdom 6:12-16

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13