

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Stepping out of the darkness of addiction and into the light of recovery happens when we willingly surrender ourselves to God. In the beginning, this means simply being open to the direction and counsel offered by our peers and others in recovery who have experienced freedom from the shackles of lust addiction, sexual compulsions, and unhealthy attachments. Honesty with ourselves, God, and others slowly becomes a new pattern as we work through our own denial and recognize how desperately we need help.

Embracing the truth of our condition amplifies our motivation to continue on the pathway of recovery. We find that our cross seems to lighten when we share our burdens, thoughts, hopes, and lives with others. Keep in mind, the presence of an addiction in our lives is not a referendum on our character or status as a beloved son or daughter of God.

This Sunday's Gospel Acclamation summarizes the turning point that takes place as we begin working the Twelve Steps and finally face the reality of our lives. Taken from the Gospel of Mark:

*The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light;
on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death,
light has arisen.*

God, who breathed life into the world and crafted each one of us, takes an active role in this journey. Jesus Christ, through his life, death, and resurrection, takes the burden of this transformation away from us and simply asks that we abandon our nets and follow Him.

In many ways, there is a temptation to think that we need to make a little bit of progress on our own before we come to Him for help. God asks us to pick up the shovel while He moves mountains, yet this type of attitude is a manifestation of our own pride and lack of trust in God. It is particularly prevalent among those seeking freedom from lust, pornography, and sexual attachments. Lord, deliver us from self-reliance and keep us desiring your grace!

Those who have found a personal relationship with Christ have done so in a way that continues through honest prayer. If we want to fill ourselves with more of Him, we will need to empty ourselves of expectations and some assumptions we've held prior to starting this journey.

This Sunday's Sunday Gospel Reading tells a story of Jesus relieving a man with an unclean spirit. The demon within this person knows Jesus by name and authority, showing the infinite strength with which our Lord provides for and protects us.

Are there barriers to you sharing the nature of your condition and the authentic truth of what's going on in your life with another person? The door of freedom tends to be unlocked by a combination of honesty, humility, willingness, and open-mindedness. We can turn to scripture, the lives of the Saints, and the experience, strength, and hope offered by our fellows in recovery to find inspiration, encouragement, and guidance along the way.

Reflection Questions

- Reflect upon and share about your transformation from darkness to light.
- What helps you remain honest with yourself and others? What's standing in the way of sharing the truth of what's going on in your life with a trusted peer or fellow in recovery?
- How does prayer, scripture, the lives of the Saints, or the experience of others in recovery inspire, encourage, and guide your recovery?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

Gospel: Mark 1:21-28