

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time



It can be hard to make sense of the suffering we go through before we find help. The agony and darkness of addiction takes a variety of shapes, and as we work to stay sober, clean, abstinent, balanced, or free, we take ownership of the behaviors and attitudes that led us and kept us there. The Twelve Steps give us a method to navigate suffering and resentment. If we work a thorough First Step, we see the natural consequences of our actions a bit more objectively.

Expecting fairness from life often leaves one disappointed. As we grow spiritually while recovering from our addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments, we begin to notice that we are improving in our response to life even if the conditions around us show no change. As some would say, we begin *living life on life's terms*.

Scripture is meant to uncover truths about us, God, and the nature of our relationship. The Bible reveals these truths in an assortment of ways, and this Sunday's First Reading from the Book of Job goes to great lengths to bring light to the problem of unmerited suffering. Job is a righteous man who is attempting to reconcile the unjust anguish that has come his way:

*Job spoke, saying:
Is not man's life on earth a drudgery?
Are not his days those of hirelings?
He is a slave who longs for the shade,
a hireling who waits for his wages.
So I have been assigned months of misery,
and troubled nights have been allotted to me.
If in bed I say, "When shall I arise?"
then the night drags on;
I am filled with restlessness until the dawn.
My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle;
they come to an end without hope.
Remember that my life is like the wind;
I shall not see happiness again.*

This is a man in darkness. We've likely been there, although may not have expressed it in such a way. The depth of despair that addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments bring us to can erase all sense of hope for a better tomorrow. Thankfully, we have been given a new opportunity to claim the life that God has planned for us. We can cultivate this life by sharing and surrendering the darkness of our past, remembering to focus on the virtues of honesty and humility.

Jesus turns our suffering around, even allowing it to be used as an asset to remain faithful to Him and help others when given the chance. It is likely that we have been guided by those who were once in our shoes, eager to share the freedom that they found in the Twelve Steps and the sacraments of the Church.

In this Sunday's Second Reading, Saint Paul shares experience, strength, and hope that can benefit us as we seek to turn our dark past into a valuable asset to help others and remain longing for His grace:

*Although I am free in regard to all,
I have made myself a slave to all
so as to win over as many as possible.
To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak.
I have become all things to all, to save at least some.
All this I do for the sake of the gospel,
so that I too may have a share in it.*

Reflection Questions

- Can you relate to the darkness and suffering described by Job?
- How has a recovery program helped you live life on life's terms?
- Reflect upon and describe how your experience with suffering has kept you close to God and capable of helping others.

40 Meetings in 40 Days Challenge

Establish or renew a foundation for recovery and develop healthy spiritual practices this Lent!

- The 40 Meetings in 40 Days Challenge is an invitation to grow closer to Jesus Christ and renew your commitment to recovery this Lent
- Commit to attending a recovery meeting every day for 40 days and engage daily spiritual routines
- Challenge begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14
- For more information and to register visit catholicinrecovery.com/40daychallenge

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Job 7:1-4, 6-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23

Gospel: Mark 1:29-39