

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



“Our Savior Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought life to light through the Gospel.” We hear these words from the Second Letter of Saint Timothy during the Gospel Acclamation in this Sunday’s liturgy, summarizing the theme of this Sunday’s Mass readings. To begin, the First Reading from the Old Testament book of Wisdom notes:

*For God formed man to be imperishable;
the image of his own nature he made him.
But by the envy of the devil, death entered the
world, and they who belong to his company
experience it.*

While in the grip of our addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments, we experienced death. This manifested through isolation, hopelessness, broken relationships, loss of self-worth, and feelings that we were no longer worthy of anything better. We reached for the source of our addiction—either in the bottle, compulsive eating, restricted eating, purging, legal or illegal drugs, compulsive spending, lustful behavior, or excessive control and fear to name a few—for brief moments of comfort. Of course, this cycle of addiction reinforced the darkness.

We have been crafted in the image and likeness of God. Our identity lies in the unmerited grace that we are His beloved sons and daughters, regardless of our attempts to cut ourselves off from the Lord. It is possible that our efforts to find comfort are rooted in a desire that only God can fill. As we recognize the limitations and consequences of directing life according to our own will, we put faith in God doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

This Sunday’s Gospel Reading celebrates the faithful healing of two individuals. First, a woman suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years:

*She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him
in the crowd and touched his cloak.
She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured."
Immediately her flow of blood dried up.
She felt in her body that she was healed of her
affliction.*

Second, a synagogue official named Jairus sought out Jesus to give his twelve-year-old daughter new life:

*Seeing [Jesus] he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, saying,
"My daughter is at the point of death.
Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live."*

We might find our own faith woven through these two gospel stories. The hemorrhaging woman spent all the money she had on professional help, but her disease worsened until she had an encounter with Jesus. Jairus was told by members of his own home that his daughter was beyond saving. He advocated for his loved one when she was no longer capable and brought the Lord to save her.

We walk our recovery journey today with the joy of knowing that Jesus Christ loves us, he gave his life to save us, and now he is living at our side every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free us. As we move beyond the soul-crushing cycle of addiction (which involves shame, fear, and dependence upon behaviors and substances) and into the life-saving cycle of recovery, we learn that we can count on God and others to meet our needs and that God and healthy relationships are our greatest need and source of comfort.

Reflection Questions

- How is your life different today compared to when you were in the grip of your addiction, compulsion, or unhealthy attachment?
- What happened to make this change?
- How do you maintain and enrich the freedom you've found through Jesus Christ and 12-step recovery?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24

Responsorial Psalm: 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11, 12, 13

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15

Gospel: Mark 5:21-43