

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time



The Catholic Church is full of rich tradition and history, much of which has its roots in ancient Judaism. Finding balance between truth and tradition can be difficult for some today and has been an ongoing challenge that Jesus confronted during his time. When called out by Pharisees and scribes for the impurity of his disciples, Jesus notes their hypocrisy and responds by citing the prophet Isaiah:

*This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines human precepts.
You disregard God's commandment but cling to
human tradition.*

Bishop Robert Barron likens the law—religious tradition put into formal guidelines—to a suit of armor used to protect a soldier in battle. When that armor gets too heavy and burdensome, it weighs him down and leaves him more vulnerable to attack. The same can be said of our spiritual development in recovery and increased commitment to the sacraments. “We love the law, but we don’t allow the law to stifle the essence of our spiritual life,” Bishop Barron notes.

The beauty of coming to know Christ through recovery from lust addiction is found in our authentic desire for a savior. Our desperation for change tends to cut through human complication and focus our energy on cultivating new life in Christ. We have come to find that lip service alone leaves us disappointed and empty. Faith and recovery demand that we get into action and put our belief to work.

This Sunday’s Second Reading calls our attention to the grace that God bestows upon us and our response as faithful Christians. Over the next five weeks, the Church will explore the Letter of St. James, a favorite among the pioneers of 12-step recovery. This Sunday’s passage instructs the course of our recovery, beginning with an acknowledgment of the gift we’ve been given:

*All good giving and every perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father of lights,
with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by
change.
He willed to give us birth by the word of truth
that we may be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

We put our trust in the word of God and seek to know and do His will through a variety of ways. Cultivating our faith is an important starting point and can be done by establishing a foundation through the first three steps (admitting our powerlessness over lust and unmanageability of life run on our own, coming to believe that God can restore us to sanity, and making a decision to turn our will and life over to His care). St. James continues by commanding:

*Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you
and is able to save your souls.
Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves.*

Our reception of God's word is not our end point but rather propels us into action. We rely on God and others to help conduct a personal moral inventory, an action that moves us into reconciliation and restoration. Along the journey, we are given opportunities to appreciate how law and tradition can protect the freedom afforded to us by Jesus.

Reflection Questions

- How have religious traditions and the pursuit of truth enriched your faith?
- What regular actions do you take to guide your faith and support your recovery?
- We celebrate the Feast Days of St. Monica (August 27) and St. Augustine (August 28) this week. How have saints played a role in your recovery?

Daily Recovery Reflection in Your Inbox

Start your day with a reflection based on the daily Mass readings to deepen your recovery and faith

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Deuteronomy 4:2-3, 3-4, 4-5

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 15:1-2, 20-21

Second Reading: James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

Gospel: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23