

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice.

This passage from the Letter of Saint James begins the Second Reading this Sunday and describes the twisted attitudes that tend to develop amidst the presence of alcoholism and addiction. As we sink deeper into the family cycle of addiction, we might reflect on the challenges brought on by our passion to force change:

*Where do the wars
and where do the conflicts among you come from?
Is it not from your passions
that make war within your members?
You covet but do not possess.
You kill and envy but you cannot obtain;
you fight and wage war.
You do not possess because you do not ask.
You ask but do not receive,
because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your
passions.*

Upon entering recovery, we are told that a spiritual awakening is necessary to find freedom from the grip of the spiritual family disease of addiction. It is natural for us to then ask, "What do I have to do to make that happen for me and my loved ones?" The truth is that our recovery is not predicated on what *we* can do, but rather on what *God* can do.

Therefore, the Twelve Steps of recovery and the sacraments of the Church move us toward surrendering our ambitions, control, and expectations into the hands of God. We act upon the suggestions of mentors and peers upon hearing how God has worked in their lives. Attempts to "figure it all out" tend to distract us from the work of God and reinforce the prideful attitude from which we seek freedom.

Jesus' disciples encountered a similar challenge as they traveled from town to town with him. Like Peter last Sunday, the disciples just didn't get it. They asked questions hoping to uncover the identity and mission of Jesus but were unable to do so without jealousy and selfish ambitions. This is apparent in this Sunday's Gospel Reading when Jesus foreshadows his suffering, death, and resurrection. The disciples were confused:

*They had been discussing among themselves on the way
who was the greatest.
Then [Jesus] sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them,
"If anyone wishes to be first,
he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."*

By showing up and walking the pathway of recovery, we come to understand that we may need to pass through hardship as a pathway to peace. This means coming to some honest conclusions about our capacity to create change for our loved ones. At some point, we may even give up hope of having a better past and, instead, focus our efforts on living this particular day successfully.

Like the disciples, we need to undergo a *metanoia* (change of heart) before we can fully grasp how power is exercised in the recovery process. A good way to start is by practicing Step One and admitting we are powerless over alcohol and addiction. God and others in our fellowship will help us along the way.

As Saint James notes that our pride and selfish ambitions cause conflict, he also shares the fruits of God's work when we humble ourselves to Him:

*The wisdom from above is first of all pure,
then peaceable, gentle, compliant,
full of mercy and good fruits,
without inconstancy or insincerity.
And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace
for those who cultivate peace.*

Reflection Questions

- Consider and describe how jealousy and selfish ambitions have been part of your experience coping with the cycle of family addiction.
- How do you balance surrendering control to God while still exercising personal agency and self-discovery in recovery?
- Describe the conversion or *metanoia* that you are experiencing in recovery and through your faith.

National Addiction Recovery Month and Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows

September is recognized as National Addiction Recovery Month and the month when we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows (September 15)

Let us come together as a community to extend love to all who have experienced the agony of family suffering through addiction, family separation, grief, and the loss of a loved one.

Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us.

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 53:3-4, 5, 6, 8

Second Reading: James 3:16-4:3

Gospel: Mark 9:30-37