

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time



For adult children of dysfunctional homes, staying on the path of recovery can be a challenging and often unfamiliar journey. Our old coping mechanisms—perfectionism, people-pleasing, emotional withdrawal, hypervigilance—once helped us survive, but over time they created their own set of consequences: burnout, resentment, broken relationships, and an inability to trust. In recovery, God calls us into a new way of living. The circumstances around us may remain complex, but as we place our will and our lives into His care, our ability to respond with clarity, peace, and self-respect grows stronger.

God is forming and strengthening us, often in ways we do not immediately see. He has given us spiritual tools—fellowship with others who understand, prayer, healthy boundaries, the Twelve Steps, and Scripture—to guide us. Yet stepping away from old family patterns brings its own discomfort. Without the familiar roles we played growing up, we may feel vulnerable, anxious, or unsure of our identity. Facing these feelings requires courage, and the shared wisdom of those who have walked before us reassures us that change is possible.

This Sunday's second reading speaks directly to this process (Hebrews 12:7–13):

*Endure your trials as “discipline”;
God treats you as sons.
For what “son” is there whom his father does not
discipline?
At the time,
all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain,
yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness
to those who are trained by it.
So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak
knees.
Make straight paths for your feet,
that what is lame may not be disjointed but healed.*

Many of us grew up with a distorted view of discipline—seeing it as unpredictable punishment, neglect, or control. Recovery helps us see that God’s discipline is different: it is loving guidance that heals rather than harms. His discipline invites us to step out of unhealthy patterns, even when that means feeling uncomfortable in the short term.

“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough,” Jesus says to a crowd in this Sunday’s Gospel reading.

For us, the narrow gate might mean telling the truth when it feels risky, letting ourselves rest instead of overworking to earn approval, or trusting God rather than defaulting to self-reliance. Each of these choices strengthens the healthy “muscles” we need for emotional and spiritual maturity.

Over time, God’s discipline becomes a source of security, not fear. As we embrace His guidance, He transforms our pain into freedom, joy, and purpose—and we begin to experience life not as survivors, but as beloved children of God.

Reflection Questions

- How has your view of discipline changed since entering recovery?
- What “narrow gate” steps are you being called to take as you leave old family patterns behind?
- How can you allow God’s loving discipline to replace fear-driven control in your life this week?

The Value of Service in Recovery

A webinar exploring the service imperative in which we are called to participate in our recovery and faith

- Webinar on **Wednesday, August 27 at 7p ET/4p PT**
- Gain a deeper understanding of why service is vital to sustain recovery, insight into the Catholic call to serve, tools for discerning and using your God-given gifts, practical ideas for service roles, and how to start a meeting
- Free for CIR+ members otherwise \$10 to register
- This and all webinar recordings available on CIR+
- Register at **www.catholicinrecovery.com/webinars**

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Isaiah 66:18-21

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117:1, 2

Second Reading: Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

Gospel: Luke 13:22-30