

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time



Remaining on a path of recovery as a family member impacted by addiction is not always easy. Our old patterns of coping—controlling, enabling, rescuing, or withdrawing—brought real consequences. Often, these behaviors left us drained, resentful, and feeling like we were carrying the weight of the world on our shoulders. Through recovery and the grace of God, we have been awakened to a new way of living. The circumstances surrounding our loved one may not change right away, but as we surrender our will and our life over to His care, our ability to respond to the challenges of life grows stronger.

God is forming and strengthening us for this journey. We have been given spiritual tools—prayer, Scripture, the Twelve Steps, healthy boundaries, and fellowship—that help us stay grounded in His peace. But spiritual growth often comes with growing pains. Without our familiar coping mechanisms, we may have to face fear, grief, anger, and anxiety head-on. In these moments, we are reminded how valuable it is to hear the experience, strength, and hope from others who have walked this road before us.

This Sunday's second reading speaks to the reality of growing through discomfort and the discipline of change (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.*

We sometimes mistake natural consequences—whether in our loved one’s life or in our own—as punishment from God. But God does not “let us off the hook” in ways that enable unhealthy behavior. Instead, He allows us to experience reality so we can learn and grow. Like a loving parent practicing tough love, God uses discipline to draw us back to His mercy. In the past, we often tried to avoid this pain—sometimes by taking over for our loved one, sometimes by shutting down emotionally—only to remain stuck in a painful cycle.

“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.

We prepare for this narrow gate every time we choose to let go of control, set a healthy boundary, sit with uncomfortable emotions, spend time in prayer and reflection, or simply be present with our loved one without trying to fix them. These choices, though difficult, build our spiritual strength.

God’s discipline is never meant to harm us—it is a training ground for peace, freedom, and joy. If we can humble ourselves to be shaped by it, He will turn our pain into purpose.

Reflection Questions

- What “growing pains” have you experienced as you’ve changed your approach toward your loved one?
- How can you view God’s discipline as an expression of His love rather than a punishment?
- What is one step you can take this week to choose the narrow gate instead of old coping patterns?

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