

Reflection Questions

- When reviewing your addictive and compulsive behavior, how do jealousy and selfish ambitions play a part in the consequences you've experienced?
 - How can you also identify fear in the context of your addictive behavior?

- When you notice yourself falling back into selfish, resentful, and dishonest behavior, what has been helpful to realign your attitude and will with God's?
 - How are you relying on the sacraments as part of this process?

25th 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 of this week's Sunday mass and speaks directly to the root of our addictions and unhealthy attachments. This reading concludes by describing the futile nature of our self-seeking attitude and behavior, some of which we may have experienced ourselves:

*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 a necessary component of finding freedom from our addictions and compulsions. It is natural for us to then ask, “What do I have to do to make that happen?” The truth is that addiction 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 been working in their lives. Attempts we make to “figure it all out” tend to distract us from the work of God and reinforce the prideful attitude from which we seek to be free.

Christ’s disciples encountered a similar challenge as they traveled from town-to-town with him. Like Peter last Sunday, the disciples just don’t get it. They are asking questions hoping to uncover the identity and mission of Jesus, but they are unable to do so without jealousy and selfish ambition. This is apparent in this week’s gospel reading when Christ 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 engaging the recovery process, we are exercising personal agency and taking responsibility for the behavior that has gotten us here. At some point, we may even give up hope on having a better past and, instead, focus our efforts on living today successfully.

Like the disciples, we need to undergo a *metanoia*—or change of heart—before we can fully grasp how power is going to be exercised in the recovery process. A good way to start is by practicing step one and admitting we are powerless over our addictions and compulsions. 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.*