

Reflection Questions

- Can you describe the darkness you experienced prior to beginning the journey of addiction recovery?
- Did you/do you hold a particular vision of what God's Kingdom should look like?
- How has Jesus resumed leadership in your life and in what ways is he accompanying you to freedom in the Kingdom of God?

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time



As we approach the end of a calendar year and gear up for the holidays, we as a Church also conclude the liturgical year before starting anew in Advent. We are in a season of darkness as days get shorter and nights get longer while we anticipate the coming of our Lord. Amidst this darkness, our Sunday mass readings tend to follow an apocalyptic tone leading up to Advent.

This week's gospel reading finds Jesus speaking to the disciples:

*"In those days after that tribulation
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from the sky,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.*

*And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in
the clouds'
with great power and glory,
and then he will send out the angels
and gather his elect from the four winds,
from the end of the earth to the end of the sky."*

Without context, this kind of foreshadowing can be quite unsettling. For over 500 years, the Israelites were longing for a Messiah to restore their people to their proper place in the world. Those that were unable to turn their will over to the care of God resisted the presence of Jesus even as He walked in their midst. The death and transformation of life as they knew it did not fit their vision of salvation and recovery. As a people, they did not turn their will and lives over to the care of God.

Jesus Christ is not just a sentimental figure exposed through the stories of the New Testament. Scripture readings over the coming weeks describe a Rightful King who has returned to resume his leadership in a world which had fallen under the influence of dark, cunning, and baffling powers.

In the same way He arrived in the world amidst a great spiritual battle, Jesus seeks to take reign of our lives and accompany us to freedom in the Kingdom of God. Last week, our reflection noted that when we feel powerful, we are more likely to keep God at bay. In a pit of darkness, a ray of light can do incredible things. Over time, Jesus calls us out of the shadows of denial and into full relationship with Him and our neighbor.

Our fellowship provides an opportunity to light each other's candle, one day at a time. Some of us show up radiating with life and joy. Others show up at the end of their rope, lost in life and desperate to find a new way. One Catholic in Recovery member notes having witnessed the love of Christ face-to-face for the first time while attending a meeting in the midst of great spiritual darkness.

We are united by our collective need for a savior. Sacramentally, our plunge into the waters of baptism reaches the depths of our darkness and is necessary for our conversion. Similarly, in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus uses the term baptism when he talks about the spiritual plunge that he will be taking with his death: "There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!" (Lk 12:50).

We find our identity through the same waters of baptism. This is expressed in our group meetings when we identify as addicts in recovery. Admission of our own powerlessness is pronounced with our faith in God who restores us to sanity. Turning our will and lives over to His care allows us to find purpose in the brokenness, powerlessness, and unmanageability that brings us here.