

Reflection Questions

- What expectations do you hold regarding the likelihood of hardship and disappointment in your recovery?
 - What options or tools do you have to accept hardship as the pathway to peace?
- How have you experienced new life sprouting throughout your recovery?
 - Are you sharing its fruit with others?

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Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: Acts 14:21-27

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13

2nd Reading: Revelation 21:1-5a

Gospel: John 13:31-33a, 34-35

5th Sunday of Easter



During the season of Easter, our First Readings are taken from the Acts of the Apostles, bearing witness to the growth of the early Church. Similarly, our liturgy turns to the Book of Revelation—the final book of the Bible—for the source of our Second Readings during this time. Here we find John's prophetic writing which looks forward to the hope of eternal glory awaiting us.

In this week's Second Reading, we hear the vision of a new heaven and a new earth:

*I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
"Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race.
He will dwell with them and they will be his
people
and God himself will always be with them as
their God.
He will wipe every tear from their eyes,
and there shall be no more death or mourning,
wailing or pain,
for the old order has passed away."
The One who sat on the throne said,
"Behold, I make all things new."*

It might be challenging for the newcomer to see this vision through the mask of fear and anger. There is a tendency for all of us to believe that everything will be okay as long as our loved ones follow our direction and take our advice. Below the surface of this idea is the truth that we need the aid of a Higher Power and fellowship of others walking a similar path.

Like those carrying the message of recovery, Paul and Barnabas travel from town to town in order to share experience, strength, and hope. They note the marvelous things that Jesus has done and proclaim the message of new life that is available to all who are willing to hear it. For families shackled by compulsive behavior and trapped in patterns of addiction, this is very good news. God has always journeyed with us, and when we surrender our will to Him, He makes all things new.

Without the support of God and others, we may hold on to the idea that things must go smoothly for us. In our own recovery, we are certain to face trials and temptations. Our circumstances will not always change, but the way we respond to them will. This transition is highlighted in the Serenity Prayer as we accept hardship as the pathway to peace. This is also the message of the apostles who grew the Church, as found in this week's First Reading:

They strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying, "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."

Jesus is the essence of "a new freedom and a new happiness" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 83) which is promised in 12 step recovery. He offers a new commandment to His followers. "As I have loved you, so you also should love one another," He shares as His own passion and hardship begins to unfold. "Now is the Son of Man glorified," Jesus adds as He is going to be the first to live up to the new commandment being announced to His disciples.

Both the 12 steps of recovery and the sacramental life of the Church prepare a path that requires us to give away what we find. We undergo intense spiritual growth and progress, one day at a time, so that we may learn to lay down our lives in love. Healthy self-sacrifice does not happen automatically, but if we remain connected to the process, we will be amazed by what a new heaven and new earth have in store for us.