

Reflection Questions

- How have you experienced freedom throughout your recovery journey?
 - Does freedom mean something different to you now than it has in the past?

- How is God calling you to be of service to others?

- Have you connected with others in your recovery fellowship so that you can reach out to others on a consistent basis?

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Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: 1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

2nd Reading: Galatians 5:1, 13-18

Gospel: Luke 9:51-62

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Christian freedom involves freedom *from* attachment so that we may find freedom *for* carrying out the will of God. This is far different than secular depictions of freedom which imagine freedom as the means to do what we want regardless of moral consequences or limitations. In recovery, we cannot find true freedom without the help of God. In this sense, relying on God means letting go of possible outcomes and expectations while committing ourselves to service to others.

This theme is explored in our readings this week as we hear Saint Paul express in our Second Reading:

*For you were called for freedom, brothers and sisters.
But do not use this freedom
as an opportunity for the flesh;
rather, serve one another through love.
For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement,
namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
But if you go on biting and devouring one another,
beware that you are not consumed by one
another.*

We begin to unpack this spiritual principle in 12-step recovery when we recognize that most of our troubles stem from fear and self-centered decision making. When things do not go our way, we exert ourselves more and the perception of scarcity slowly dominates our lives. This puts us in a position to be hurt, which often feels like legitimate suffering but is really a consequence of our compulsive behavior.

We tend to ask what we can do for ourselves in order to get rid of our addictions and compulsions.

Recovery literature is very clear that we must be rid of selfishness if we are to know freedom, although this is something that neither we nor any human power can do. “There often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God’s help” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 62).

Upon recognizing the lack of power we have over addiction and attachments by working step 1, we enter into relationship with God by putting our faith in Him. We surrender our will and lives over to His care through prayer and by following the guidance of others. A good sponsor will suggest we commit ourselves to service by helping out at meetings, reaching out to newcomers, and creating space where we focus more on others than ourselves.

People with compulsions and addictions, as well as those impacted by a loved one’s addiction, tend to take things to the extreme. When we find ourselves wrapped up in either self-pity or grandiose thinking, a phone call to another person in recovery can quickly help realign our attitude and behavior. In addition to putting things into perspective and slowing down enough to process what might seem overwhelming, reaching out to others opens us to the work that God would have us perform.

With this new attitude and outlook, we slowly begin to find ourselves obsessing less and empathizing more. The role of victim fades while gratitude for what God is doing through us rises. Whether a few days or a few decades removed from our addiction, we realize that the best way to maintain our freedom is to continually ask God what we can do for others.