

Reflection Questions

- Have you recognized a shift in your values and priorities since beginning your recovery journey?
 - How would you describe this transition?

- What idols did you worship in response to your loved one's addiction?

- Have the secondary benefits of recovery ever stood in the way of maintaining the peace and serenity that comes from a spiritual awakening?

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Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17

2nd Reading: Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

Gospel: Luke 12:13-21

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!

This line begins the liturgy of the word this Sunday, directing our attention to the things that are of Christ. This is the same transition that happens as we participate in recovery. When our priorities change, we begin to see beauty, truth, and goodness in all things, although with a proper perspective.

A common phrase in recovery groups is "don't leave before the miracle happens." This implies that some transformation is bound to come with a commitment to the spiritual principles of the 12-steps and sacramental life of the Church. We often hear similar expressions in recovery and church language. "Spiritual awakening," "psychic change," "die to self," or "raised with Christ" all imply a radical reordering of our life around God. This is a key component to finding freedom from the family disease of addiction and our own unhealthy attachments.

Saint Paul begins this week's Second Reading stressing the importance of this radical reorientation. "If you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God," he notes. He then offers a formula for right living and directly speaks to the values of recovery:

Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry. Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator.

It is helpful to consider what Saint Paul refers to as *the greed that is idolatry*. Here, Paul shares that our self-centered attitudes and behaviors are barriers to renewed life. Idolatry, meaning the worship of idols or things not of God, is something that we come to know very well in our response to addiction. Our lives were once ordered around our loved one's addictions and our own attachments while everything else seemed insignificant.

Even after we have found freedom from the compulsion to control, we must remain committed to seeking *what is above*. Otherwise, we are likely to replace old behaviors and attitudes with an attachment to power, pleasure, honor, or wealth. Our readings this week speak to the fleeting nature of anything not of God, yet we can spend a lifetime expecting fulfillment from these idols.

A less familiar, yet equally important, phrase spoken in recovery groups is "don't leave *after* the miracle happens." The real gift of recovery is the freedom that comes with ordering our lives around God. We may experience secondary benefits, such as a return to financial freedom, reliable friendships, the ability to maintain a romantic relationship, or the return of our health, to name a few. However, the real treasure is found in the immaterial.

The life-or-death nature of recovery can fade and, in time, so will the freedom we have come to know if we do not stay faithful to the spiritual practices that helped get us here. Our *new self* can leave idolatry behind with the humble recognition that it is God who provides *our daily bread*. Everything else is vanity.