

Reflection Questions

- When have you experienced your pursuit of perfection getting in the way of your own spiritual progress?
 - What tools help you recognize the value of progress in your recovery?
- Have feelings of injustice ever kept you from reconciling with someone?
- Share about a time you made amends with someone and received a different result from what you expected.

Additional Resources Recommended

If you are interested in going deeper into the topics of reconciliation and spiritual progress, consider reading:

- *The Spirituality of Imperfection* by Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham
- *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen
- *Our One Great Act of Fidelity* by Ronald Rolheiser
- *Lord, Have Mercy* by Scott Hahn

Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Gospel: Matthew 5:38-48

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time



To those new to the process of recovery, the opening line of this week's Sunday Mass Readings might be challenging. Discussions of holiness can be found in both our First and Second Readings this week, perhaps provoking the response, "What an order, I can't go through with it!" or, "Of course I'm holy." This week's First Reading begins:

*The Lord said to Moses,
"Speak to the whole Israelite community and tell them:
Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy.*

At face value, this can seem like an impossible task for any of us. Especially as we're confronted with the circumstances of our families, we might carry some shame as we attempt to approach God. Fortunately, this is not the case, as the author of Leviticus then goes on to describe holiness as the compassionate treatment of our neighbor—something each of us are capable of.

Building on the theme of our local church acting as a field hospital after battle, it is valuable for us to consider our attitude toward holiness, perfection, and spiritual progress. Remember, an important recovery principle is that we claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection. Scripture affirms this truth as Saint Paul writes, "As it is written, there is no one just, not one; for all have sinned and fell short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10, 23).

God meets us where we are at, although He does not want us to stay there. Thanks to the saving grace of recovery fellowships and the sacramental life of the Church, we are guided by the path of progress paved by others who have been in our shoes. We grow in holiness—or the capacity to treat our neighbor with compassion—as we shed layers of our own self-centeredness.

The 12 steps are ordered in a way that penetrates through our denial and allows us to clearly see the impact addiction has had on us and our families. Relationships that were once compromised by our reaction to addiction can be restored by surrendering our will and lives over to God, working through an honest personal inventory with a sponsor, sharing the nature of our wrongs with God and another person, asking Him to remove our shortcomings, and making amends to those we hurt.

Loving our neighbor requires courage and humility, especially when we recognize our part in the process of disconnection. Moments of reconciliation are powerful when we lead with our own failings and honestly explore how to make things right.

Jesus remains fixed on the idea of reconciliation and making amends, while also understanding that it can be a challenging process. Furthermore, we extend the love of God and new way of life to everyone, not just with those we get along well with. Jesus asks more from us in this week's Gospel Reading:

*"You have heard that it was said,
You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.
But I say to you, love your enemies
and pray for those who persecute you,
that you may be children of your heavenly Father,
for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good,
and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.
For if you love those who love you, what
recompense will you have?"*

Again, the steps are ordered in a way that progressively lead to amends, reconciliation, and a spiritual awakening. Step 8 invites us to make a list of all persons we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all. We may be reluctant to make amends to those we feel have also injured us. Remember, we are no longer in the business of assuming responsibility for others.

Our willingness will grow if we pray for such people, even if we are not completely genuine in our request. Prayer changes us and unites us with our neighbor, particularly when we get out of our comfort zone and into recovery.