

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Upon entering recovery, we hear that a spiritual awakening is a necessary component of finding freedom from our addictions and compulsions. It is natural for us to then ask, *what do I have to do to make that happen?* The truth is that addiction recovery is not predicated on what we can do, but rather on what God can do.

Therefore, the 12 steps of recovery and the sacraments of the Church move us toward surrendering our ambitions, control, and expectations into the hands of God. We act upon the suggestions of mentors and peers after hearing how God has been working in their lives. Plans and schemes to “figure it all out” tend to distract us from the work of God and reinforce the prideful attitude from which we seek to be free. For better or worse, we have lost the privilege to negotiate our surrender.

William James shares a wonderfully concise and accurate description of what the Gospels call *metanoia* and what 12-step recovery knows as the 2nd Step. When Jesus began his preaching by telling people to *repent*, he was inviting a transition from attachment to serenity. James adds that repentance is an experience that feels like a movement “from tenseness, self-responsibility, and worry to equanimity, receptivity, and peace.”

“The chief wonder of it,” James continues, “is that it so often comes about, not by doing, but by simply relaxing and throwing the burden down.” As addicts or people who care about addicts, we have spent years trying hard to do it, to handle it, or to throw our willpower at it. However, *it*—whatever our obsession/compulsion is—just keeps weighing us down, as a yoke does oxen pulling a plow.

Although we are weary and find life burdensome, we continue to insist that we humans—especially ourselves—ought to be more powerful than the things we are attached to, no matter how cunning, baffling, and powerful they might be.

We finally enter recovery when we simply stop trying to run the show. Recovery literature describes, “We have ceased fighting anything or anyone... That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting, neither are we avoiding temptation... Instead, the problem has been removed” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 84-85).

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By showing up and engaging the recovery process, we are exercising personal agency and taking responsibility for the behavior that has gotten us here. At some point, we may even give up hope on having a better past and, instead, focus our efforts on living today successfully.

We need to undergo a *metanoia*—or change of heart—before we can fully grasp how power is going to be exercised in the recovery process. A good way to start is by admitting we are powerless over our addictions and compulsions and that our lives had become unmanageable. This paints a clear picture of the insanity which once ruled our lives and propels us to believe that we can be restored through God.

This week's Gospel Reading is Christ's invitation to restoration:

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

- How have you previously attempted to find freedom from your challenges and what were the results of exercising your own willpower?
- What burdens drove you to seek recovery and what new tools do you have to deal with them now?
- How do you describe the restoration that God has brought you through?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Zechariah 9:9-10

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14

2nd Reading: Romans 8:9, 11-13

Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30