

## 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time



The Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous* speaks clearly about the importance of fellowship in our recovery efforts at the beginning of the 2nd Chapter—“There is a Solution”:

“We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain’s table. Unlike the feelings of the ship’s passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined.

The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution.”

Finding common ground based on our weakness rather than our strength gives us the opportunity to seek a Power greater than ourselves in order to find new life. Our greatest defense against lust addiction and compulsive sexual behavior is reaching our hands out to those still struggling. In recovery, we enter into a fellowship where we can only receive if we are willing to give of ourselves.

Similarly, we enter the Church in need of salvation and take refuge in a common vessel. Our solution is found in the grace offered by Jesus Christ. We engage him through the Word, the sacraments of the Church, and when we reach our hand out to fellow brothers in need. We gather today in the midst of God, who grants us the gift of faith and willingness to be here.

In this week's Sunday's Gospel Reading, we hear Jesus share about fraternal correction. We may have experienced this in some stage of our active addiction, and it may be something we find ourselves engaging as we turn to help and love another. Before this, Jesus shares how far God is willing to go in pursuit of each of us (Mt. 18:12-14):

*If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.*

Jesus then details specific direction we ought to take in order to help a lost brother or sister:

*Jesus said to his disciples:*

*"If your brother sins against you,  
go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.  
If he listens to you, you have won over your brother.  
If he does not listen,  
take one or two others along with you,  
so that 'every fact may be established  
on the testimony of two or three witnesses.'  
If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church.  
If he refuses to listen even to the church,  
then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax  
collector.*

*Amen, I say to you,  
whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in  
heaven,  
and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in  
heaven.*

*Again, amen, I say to you,  
if two of you agree on earth  
about anything for which they are to pray,  
it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father.  
For where two or three are gathered together in my  
name,  
there am I in the midst of them."*

Having been saved by great peril, let us continue to use our dark past to empathize and accompany those on the margins. At the same time, we ought to be humble and willing enough to recognize that God is the only one capable of salvation. We could not manage our own lives, and we certainly cannot manage the lives of others. God can, and will, if He is sought.

- Can you recall an experience of being the one lost sheep who God went off to find?
- What benefits have you experienced as a result of supporting others in recovery?
- What lessons do you take away from Jesus's remarks about fraternal correction?

***What About the Kids? Premier!***

*Join us Tuesday, September 8 to view the premier of the new film 'What About the Kids?'*

- Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 9:00 PM ET/6:00 PM PT
- View addiction through the lens of an 8-year-old Catholic girl whose parents are addicted to opioids
- Virtual premier will feature a screening of the film and conversation with the director/writer about his personal connections with addiction
- For more information visit: [whataboutthekidsfilm.com](http://whataboutthekidsfilm.com)

**Sunday Mass Readings this Week**

**1st Reading:** Ezekiel 33:7-9

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

**2nd Reading:** Romans 13:8-10

**Gospel:** Matthew 18:15-20