

Reflection Questions

- How would you describe your *primary purpose*?
- How do you keep outside distractions and the loud expression of personal opinions from diverting your attention away from your primary purpose?
- What environments are most conducive to your spiritual growth and allow you to find peace?

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Monthly Catholic in Recovery Newsletter

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- Monthly testimony from CIR participants
- New meeting announcements and community updates
- Resources and articles overlapping the 12 steps and the sacraments

Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 96:1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-21

A beautiful thing happens when we gather together in fellowship united under the common purpose of finding healing from addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments while growing closer to God. There are many things in our world tempting to keep us from this purpose, and we can look to Jesus Christ as our example of keeping distractions away. In this Sunday's Gospel Reading, Jesus' antagonists think they have set a trap for him:

"Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status. Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?"

Jesus is not taken aback by this, as his response steers between the two horns of the dilemma they had set up for him. As you will see, Jesus refuses to take any position in this matter:

*Knowing their malice, Jesus said,
"Why are you testing me, you hypocrites?
Show me the coin that pays the census tax." Then
they handed him the Roman coin.
He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose
inscription?"
They replied, "Caesar's."
At that he said to them,
"Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and
to God what belongs to God."*

From the point of view of Jesus' primary purpose, Caesar just isn't that important. Focused on carrying the message of the kingdom of God is a reality much greater than Caesar's kingdom.

Twelve-step recovery principles take a similar position on political and other questions. These issues must be weighed against our own primary purpose. Thus, in light of this mission, many questions, important in themselves, are irrelevant.

This does not mean that we, as individuals, should have no opinions at all. When we gather for spiritual purposes, however, the emphasis needs to be on what unites us—a common thread of addiction and a common solution—rather on the hundreds of issues on which we might disagree.

To drive this point home, consider this week's selection from Saint Paul. We are beginning a series of readings from Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, which is known to be the first Christian scripture. The first words after addressing the church of the Thessalonians are "grace and peace to you." Hear the rest:

*We give thanks to God always for all of you,
remembering you in our prayers,
unceasingly calling to mind your work of faith and
labor of love
and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ,
before our God and Father,
knowing, brothers and sisters loved by God,
how you were chosen.
For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but
also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much
conviction.*

By knowing the darkness of addiction and finding recovery through the sacramental life of the Church and the twelve steps, we've been given the same conviction. We're also promised that we will know peace. Our shared passion, purpose, and peace ought to transcend above the distractions of the world to create an environment where we can grow spiritually.

The word *peace* was the first greeting of the risen Christ and should characterize the groups that claim to follow him. If Christians and recovering people stick to their primary purpose, with a little grace we can remain at peace.