

Reflection Questions

- How do the 12 steps of addiction recovery and the sacramental life of the Church help you practice the two great commandments expressed by Jesus in this week's Gospel Reading?
- How do you experience the command to *love your neighbor as yourself* play out in recovery fellowships and in Christian living?
- Who is your neighbor?

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Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: Exodus 22:20-26

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time



We are all likely familiar with the Ten Commandments, at least to the extent that we know they exist. These commands, as well as hundreds of other Jewish laws, would have been well-known by the rulers of Jesus's time. Last week, the Sadducees (political aristocrats) attempted to put our Lord in a catch-22 by asking how they should approach paying the tax to Caesar. Jesus was not distracted from his primary purpose, as we should not be when it comes to political questions and issues that might divide us.

This week, the Pharisees (lay people concerned with preserving Mosaic tradition) take a shot at testing Jesus:

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law tested him by asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

Again, Jesus does not take the bait. Rather, he shares a way of life that is consistent with the principles of 12-step recovery and the sacramental life of the Catholic Church. Through working the steps, we get an opportunity to know and love God in an authentic way. This begins when we admit our own powerlessness over people, places, things, and circumstances—including lust addiction and unhealthy sexual attachments. Next, we find hope through from the men who have walked this journey before us and teach us to surrender our will and lives over the care of God.

A searching and fearless moral inventory reveals more about our own human nature, especially the part that we play in untangling challenging relationships. Sharing what we've found with another individual brings us closer to each other and encourages us to continue the process of healing.

Having found the fruit of relying upon God, we give more to Him, humbly asking Him to remove our shortcomings. This not-so-simple request is an act of love toward our Creator, who fashions us in His image and seeks our well-being. He also gives us the courage and strength to face our neighbor, who we are asked to love as ourselves.

The Eighth and Ninth Steps are designed to bring love to others, especially where we have gone astray. Bringing honesty and empathy back into these relationships reunites us with the Body of Christ. As active members of this body, we have found the love of God and neighbor that has been present in our lives through our baptism. We have a tangible way of re-encountering this love through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Nurturing this spiritual awakening is done by continuing to take personal inventory (and admitting when we're wrong), making time for prayer and meditation, serving others, and practicing these principles in all our affairs.

Sacramentally, we are nourished by the Eucharist and sent on mission through our confirmation. As time passes, the two commandments mentioned by Christ—love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself—become a way of life when we stay committed to our primary purpose.