

4th Sunday of Ordinary Time



Stepping out of the darkness and into the light is an act that takes place when we willingly surrender ourselves—and our egos—to God. In the beginning, this simply means being open to what is asked of us by our peers and others in recovery who have experienced freedom from addiction and the shackles of unhealthy attachments. Honesty with ourselves, God, and others slowly becomes a new pattern as we work through our own denial.

Encountering the truth of our addiction and self-centered behavior brings the necessary amount of motivation to continue on the journey. We find that our cross seems to lighten when we share with others the exact nature of our malady. Keep in mind, the presence of an addiction in your life is not a referendum on your character or status as a beloved son or daughter of God.

This week's Gospel Acclamation summarizes the turning point that takes place as we begin the steps and finally face the reality of our lives. Taken from the Gospel of Mark, we hear:

*The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light;
on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death,
light has arisen.*

God, who breathed life into the world and crafted each of us, takes an active role in this process. Jesus Christ, through his life, death, and resurrection, takes the burden of this transformation away from us and simply asks that we abandon our nets and follow Him.

In many ways, there is a temptation to think that we need to make a little bit of progress on our own before we come to Him for help. While it is true that God asks us to pick up the shovel while He moves mountains, our past experience reminds us that we have fallen short and need Him to be a part of the entire process.

Those who have found a personal relationship with Christ have done so in a way that continues through honest prayer. If we want to fill ourselves with more of Him, we will need to empty ourselves of expectations and some assumptions we've held prior to starting this journey.

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This week's Sunday Gospel Reading shares a story of Jesus relieving a man with an unclean spirit. The demon within this person knows Christ by name and authority, showing the infinite strength with which our Lord provides and protects us.

Are there barriers to you sharing the nature of your addiction and consequences with another person? There is an unusual amount of grace provided to us when we open the door of honesty and humility, and Jesus goes to great lengths to grant us freedom, one day at a time. Often, we need to see someone model it first, and we can turn to scripture and the stories of each other to see God actively working in our lives.

- Reflect upon and share how your recovery has helped you transition from darkness to light.

- What helps you remain honest with yourself and others?

- What kind of freedom do you find when sharing honestly and openly with others in recovery?

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- Monthly donors are enrolled in our Advocate's Circle:
 - free copy of *The Twelve Steps and the Sacraments*
 - weekly exclusive video/written reflections on faith and recovery delivered to your inbox
- Sign up today at catholicinrecovery.com/advocates-circle

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20

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

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

Gospel: Mark 1:21-28