

5th Sunday of Ordinary Time



It can be hard to make sense of the suffering we and our families go through before we get here. This suffering takes a variety of shapes, and as we begin to work through the steps, we see how our behavior has made it difficult to find personal freedom and establish healthy, loving boundaries. The twelve steps give us a framework to work through suffering and the resentments that remain as a result.

Expecting fairness from life often leaves one disappointed. As we grow spiritually, we begin to see that we are improving in our response to life, even if the conditions around us show no change. As some would say, we begin *living life on life's terms*. Making a daily commitment to the process of self-discovery provides a path to get there. Knowing that we are not alone eases the journey and lightens our cross.

Scripture is meant to uncover truths about us, God, and the nature of our relationship. The Bible reveals these truths in an assortment of ways, and this week's First Reading is taken from the Old Testament's Book of Job. Job is a righteous man who is attempting to reconcile the unjust suffering that has come his way:

*Job spoke, saying:
Is not man's life on earth a drudgery?
Are not his days those of hirelings?
He is a slave who longs for the shade,
a hireling who waits for his wages.
So I have been assigned months of misery,
and troubled nights have been allotted to me.
If in bed I say, "When shall I arise?"
then the night drags on;
I am filled with restlessness until the dawn.
My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; they
come to an end without hope.
Remember that my life is like the wind;
I shall not see happiness again.*

This is a man in darkness. We've likely been there, although may not have expressed it in such a way. The depth of despair brought on by addiction and unhealthy attachments can erase all hope for a better tomorrow. Thankfully, we have been given a new opportunity to claim the life that God has planned for us. We can cultivate this life by sharing and surrendering the darkness of our past, remembering to focus on the virtues of honesty and humility. Our progress is not contingent upon anyone else's behavior.

FYZWjcb Ei Yghcbg

Jesus turns our suffering around, even allowing it to be used as an asset to remain faithful to Him and help others when given the chance. It is likely that we have been guided by those who were once in our shoes, eager to share the freedom that they found in the twelve steps and the sacraments of the Church.

Saint Paul summarizes this process beautifully in this week's Second Reading:

*Although I am free in regard to all,
I have made myself a slave to all
so as to win over as many as possible.
To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak.
I have become all things to all, to save at least
some.
All this I do for the sake of the gospel,
so that I too may have a share in it.*

- How has a recovery program helped you *live life on life's terms*?
- How do you relate to the darkness and suffering described by Job?
- How does your experience with suffering keep you close to God and able to help others?

Living the Steps Series Begins Soon

Join us for a 20-week series as we overlap the Twelve Steps with the sacramental life of the Catholic Church

- Wednesdays at 7:30 PM ET/4:30 PM PT beginning February 17 (Ash Wednesday)
- Meetings held via Zoom and last for 1 hour 15 minutes
- Each meeting involves some education, reflection, and large group/small group discussion
- To register, visit catholicinrecovery.com/livingthesteps

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Job 7:1-4, 6-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23

Gospel: Mark 1:29-39