

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Many spiritual principles within addiction recovery and Christian faith have a perplexing, contradictory nature to them on the surface. You may be puzzled hearing things like “surrender to win” and “the first shall be last and the last shall be first.” Distorted cultural conceptions of success—based on power, strength, and having everything figured out—can be barriers to personal growth in recovery and hinder our personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Most of us begin our recovery journey with shame and questions about how things ever got to this point. We might begin to think we've caused our family's chaos or have the means to control it. Over time, we realize we are not alone and can begin to appreciate the new way of life shared by others impacted by the family disease of addiction. God has gotten our attention and we can now rely on Him to direct our attitude and behavior each day.

Saint Paul summarizes the humble, honest, and open attitude we ought to adopt in this week's Second Reading:

*Brothers and sisters:
That I, Paul, might not become too elated,
because of the abundance of the revelations,
a thorn in the flesh was given to me,
an angel of Satan,
to beat me, to keep me from being too elated.
Three times I begged the Lord about this,
that it might leave me, but he said to me,
“My grace is sufficient for you,
for power is made perfect in weakness.”
I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses,
in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me.
Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults,
hardships, persecutions, and constraints,
for the sake of Christ;
for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Paul learned what we all have the opportunity to discover when we work through a thorough First Step—when we are powerless, we are strong. Even upon finding freedom from the insanity of addiction, we might see that there are other aspects of our lives that may prove to be a thorn in our side. Thanks to the 12 Steps and sacraments of the Catholic Church, we have a solution rooted in God's grace.

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We need to relinquish expectations of perfection, seek spiritual progress, and be patient with ourselves as we relate our journey to that of Saint Paul. The grace of Christ is greater than any personal strength we may have. We should be more concerned with our commitment to do the next right thing rather than being perceived as strong and having it all together.

Recovery literature sheds light on the fruits of withstanding trials and difficulties, even when executed imperfectly, knowing that our power rests in God:

"All those who have persisted have found strength not ordinarily their own. They have found wisdom beyond their usual capability. And they have increasingly found a peace of mind which can stand firm in the face of difficult circumstances. We discover that we do receive guidance for our lives to just about the extent that we stop making demands upon God to give it to us on order and on our terms" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 104).

Let us reflect on the expectations we hold for God, ourselves, and others as we gaze upon the journey ahead. Rather than leaning into our own insufficiencies, we move forward and rest on the grace and power of God.

- How has your experience with weakness made it possible to receive God's grace?
- Describe the strength, wisdom, and peace of mind that has come while persisting through recovery.
- What helps you accept life on God's terms rather than your own?

Catholic in Recovery Retreat

Join us July 30 to August 1 in Wichita, KS for our inaugural Catholic in Recovery retreat!

- Join others from around the United States for a weekend of healing, renewal, and CIR fellowship
- Encounter a variety of speakers, live meetings, prayerful reflection, and sacraments
- For information and to register, visit catholicinrecovery.com/catholic-in-recovery-retreat

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Exodus 2:2-5

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 123:1-2, 2, 3-4

2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Gospel: Mark 6:1-6