

Reflection Questions

- How have jealousy and selfish ambitions fueled disorder and addiction in your life?
- How do you balance surrendering control to God while still exercising personal agency and responsibility for your behavior?
- Describe the conversion—or metanoia—that you are experiencing in recovery and the Church.

Feast Day of Our Lady of Sorrows

On Wednesday, September 15, we honor the intense grief and suffering of our Blessed Mother during the passion and death of our Lord.

Let us come together as a community to extend love to all who know the agony of family suffering through addiction, family separation, loss, and death of a loved one.

Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us.

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 53:3-4, 5, 6, 8

2nd Reading: James 3:16-4:3

Gospel: Mark 9:30-37

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice.

This passage from the Letter of Saint James begins the Second Reading this Sunday and gets to the root of our addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments. This reading concludes by describing the futile nature of our self-seeking attitude and behavior around addiction, which many of us know well:

*Where do the wars
and where do the conflicts among you come from?
Is it not from your passions
that make war within your members?
You covet but do not possess.
You kill and envy but you cannot obtain;
you fight and wage war.
You do not possess because you do not ask.
You ask but do not receive,
because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your
passions.*

Upon entering recovery, we are told that a spiritual awakening is necessary to find freedom from our addictions and compulsions. It is natural for us to then ask, “What do I have to do to make that happen?” The truth is that addiction recovery is not predicated on what we can do, but rather on what God can do.

Therefore, the Twelve Steps of recovery and the sacraments of the Church move us toward surrendering our ambitions, control, and expectations into the hands of God. We act upon the suggestions of mentors and peers upon hearing how God has been working in their lives. Attempts we make to “figure it all out” tend to distract us from the work of God and reinforce the prideful attitude from which we seek to be free.

Christ’s disciples encountered a similar challenge as they traveled from town-to-town with him. Like Peter last Sunday, the disciples just don’t get it. They are asking questions hoping to uncover the identity and mission of Jesus, but they are unable to do so without jealousy and selfish ambition. This is apparent in this week’s Gospel Reading when Jesus foreshadows his suffering, death, and resurrection. The disciples were confused:

*They had been discussing among themselves
on the way who was the greatest.
Then [Jesus] sat down, called the Twelve,
and said to them,
“If anyone wishes to be first,
he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”*

By showing up and engaging the recovery process, we are exercising personal agency and taking responsibility for the behavior that has gotten us here. At some point, we may even give up hope on having a better past and, instead, focus our efforts on living today successfully.

Like the disciples, we need to undergo a *metanoia*—or change of heart—before we can fully grasp how power is going to be exercised in the recovery process. A good way to start is by practicing Step One and admitting we are powerless over our addictions and compulsions. God and others in our fellowship will help us along the way.

As Saint James notes that our pride and selfish ambitions cause conflict, he also shares the fruits of God’s work when we humble ourselves to Him:

*The wisdom from above is first of all pure,
then peaceable, gentle, compliant,
full of mercy and good fruits,
without inconstancy or insincerity.
And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for
those who cultivate peace.*