

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time



We cannot help others without first finding help ourselves. We cannot truly enter the grace of recovery without admitting we are powerless over addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments—that our lives had become unmanageable. As we invite God and others to lead our recovery, we begin taking responsibility for our actions and recognize that there are some things we cannot change.

This is a radical shift from the old belief that our problems were of everyone else's making. Our pride and self-determination wanted to point the finger at others who wronged us or were not acting according to our plans. As a result, we felt justified in our self-righteous anger and disdain for the way the world was treating us. We could not stop engaging our addiction, compulsion, or unhealthy attachment on our own and lacked the capacity to create change. It was easier to shift blame and responsibility on others and doubt what God could really do for us.

“Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven,” we heard Jesus declare in last Sunday's liturgy. This week's Sunday Gospel Reading builds upon this challenging message and directs us to look inward at the one thing we can change—ourselves:

Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,' when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye.

The concept of self-discovery provides the tools to avoid seeing the flaws in our brothers and sisters and, instead, consider our own growth and spiritual progress. Jesus calls out what those in recovery call *two-stepping*—jumping from Step One to Step Twelve without completing the interior work that is asked of us in between.

The inclination to help others may come from a place of good intention, but it can also be a defense mechanism that distracts us from the transformation we are to undergo ourselves. There will always be chances to help others, and our assistance is more effective when we are delivering experience, strength, and hope based on the interior change that Jesus has completed within us.

There is no formula to attract others to this process other than remaining honest, humble, and open-minded. It is likely that we've been drawn to the rooms of recovery because we knew we needed to make a change. We stay because we are inspired by the authenticity of those who are continuing to be transformed by the will of God. Jesus speaks to this process as his sermon continues:

*A good tree does not bear rotten fruit,
nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit.
For every tree is known by its own fruit.*

What fruits are born from your recovery? Saint Paul suggests several that we can look to when we are living life directed by the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). These come by way of asking God to help dislodge the beam in our own eye so that we can experience a spiritual awakening through the Twelve Steps.

Reflection Questions

- What fruits are blossoming as a result of your recovery?
- What helps you stay focused on your own personal and spiritual growth rather than meddling uninvited in the concerns of another?
- What is going on in your life today that needs the attention of God and your fellows in recovery?

Catholic in Recovery Lenten Reflection Book

A compilation of many CIR members' experience, strength, and hope to accompany you through Lent

- A new seasonal e-book will feature reflections rooted in daily scripture readings and recovery principles
- Daily reflection gatherings will be available via Zoom every day of Lent
- CIR Lenten Reflection Book will be delivered free to Advocate's Circle members or available for purchase for \$5 at catholicinrecovery.com/store

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Sirach 27:40-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:54-58

Gospel: Luke 6:39-45