

Fifth Sunday of Easter



During the season of Easter, the first readings in the Catholic liturgy are taken from the Acts of the Apostles, bearing witness to the growth of the early Church. Similarly, we turn to the Book of Revelation—the final book of the Bible—for the source of our second readings during this time. In the Book of Revelation, we find John's prophetic writing which looks forward to the hope of eternal glory awaiting us. Rather than casting a dark cloud on the future, John's shared vision captures the hope that awaits us in recovery.

In this Sunday's Second Reading, we hear the vision of a new heaven and a new earth:

*I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
"Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race.
He will dwell with them and they will be his people
and God himself will always be with them as their
God.
He will wipe every tear from their eyes,
and there shall be no more death or mourning,
wailing or pain,
for the old order has passed away."
The One who sat on the throne said,
"Behold, I make all things new."*

It might be challenging for the newcomer to see this vision through the mask of shame and fear. There is a tendency for all of us to believe—or at least portray—that we have things completely under control. Below the surface of this idea lies the truth that we need the aid of God and a fellowship of others walking a similar path.

Like those carrying the message of recovery, Paul and Barnabas traveled from town to town in order to share experience, strength, and hope. They noted the marvelous things that Jesus has done and proclaimed a message of new life that is available to all who are willing to hear it. For families and individuals impacted by addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments, this is very good news. God has always journeyed with us, and when we surrender our will to Him, He makes all things new.

Reflection Questions

Without the support of God and others, we will be challenged to overcome the emotional highs and lows without the aid of our old behaviors and attitudes. In recovery, we are certain to face trials and temptations to return to old habits. The circumstances around us will not always change, but the way we respond to them will improve if we can adopt new spiritual tools and become willing to accept hardship as the pathway to peace. This is also the message of the apostles who built the Church, as found in this Sunday's First Reading:

They strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying, "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."

Jesus is the essence of "a new freedom and a new happiness" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 83) which is promised in 12-step recovery. He offers a new commandment to his followers. "As I have loved you, so you also should love one another," he shared as his own suffering and hardship began to unfold.

Both the Twelve Steps of recovery and the sacramental life of the Church prepare a path that requires us to give away what we freely find. We undergo intense spiritual growth and progress, one day at a time, so that we may learn to lay down our life in love. Self-sacrifice does not happen automatically, but if we remain connected to our fellows in family recovery, we will find our purpose along with a new heaven and a new earth.

- What vision of hope do you have for your own recovery?
- How have you experienced hardship as the pathway to peace?
 - Share how you persevered through difficult moments in recovery to remain free.
- What new purpose do you enjoy as a result of your recovery?

Catholic in Recovery Resources Online

Visit catholicinrecovery.com for a variety of resources related to addiction recovery and the Catholic Church

- Articles published weekly related to various types of addictions, the impact of addiction on families, practical application of the Twelve Steps and sacraments, and more
- Full directory of virtual and in-person meetings available
- Testimonials from CIR participants and opportunities to engage community
- Catholic in Recovery Novena

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Acts 14:21-27

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13

2nd Reading: Revelation 21:1-5a

Gospel: John 13:31-33a, 34-35