

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Christian freedom involves *freedom from* unhealthy attachments so that we may find *freedom to* carry out the will of God. This is quite different than secular depictions of freedom which imagine it as the means to do what we want regardless of moral consequences or limitations. In recovery, we can only find true freedom with the help of God. In this sense, relying on God means letting go of possible outcomes and expectations while committing ourselves to serving others.

This theme is explored in the readings this Sunday as we hear Saint Paul express in the Second Reading:

For you were called for freedom, brothers and sisters.

*But do not use this freedom
as an opportunity for the flesh;
rather, serve one another through love.*

*For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement,
namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
But if you go on biting and devouring one another,
beware that you are not consumed by one another.*

We begin to unpack this spiritual principle in 12-Step recovery when we recognize that most of our troubles stem from fear and self-centered core beliefs. When things do not go our way, we exert ourselves more and the perception of scarcity slowly dominates our lives. This puts us in a position to be hurt, which often feels like legitimate suffering but is really a consequence of our compulsive behavior.

We tend to ask what we can do for ourselves in order to get rid of our addictions and compulsions. Recovery literature is very clear that we must be rid of selfishness if we are to know freedom, although this is something that neither we nor any human power can do. “There often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God’s help” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 62).

Upon recognizing the lack of power we have over lust addiction, sexual compulsions, and other unhealthy attachments by working Step One, we enter into relationship with God by putting our faith in Him. We surrender our will and lives over to His care through prayer and by following the guidance of others. A good sponsor will suggest we commit ourselves to service by helping out at meetings, reaching out to newcomers, and creating space where we focus more on others than ourselves.

Reflection Questions

People with addictive tendencies often take things to the extreme. When we find ourselves wrapped up in either self-pity or grandiose thinking, a phone call to another guy in the group can quickly help realign our attitude and behavior. In addition to putting things into perspective and slowing down enough to process what might seem overwhelming, reaching out to others opens us to the work that God would have us perform.

With this new attitude and outlook, we slowly begin to find ourselves obsessing less and empathizing more. The role of victim fades while gratitude for what God is doing through us rises. Whether a few days, months, years, or decades removed from our addiction, we realize that the best way to maintain *freedom from* the bondage of self is by exercising our *freedom to* know, love, and serve God and others.

- How have you experienced freedom in your pursuit of recovery?
 - Does freedom mean something different to you now than it has in the past?
- How is God calling you to be of service to others?
- How do you stay connected to fellow group members and others in recovery between meetings?

Being of Service in Catholic in Recovery

Service to others is an essential part of recovery and making progress in the spiritual life. Here are a few ways to be of service in CIR or other recovery groups:

- Attend meetings regularly
- Offer your phone number to another member
- Drive someone to a meeting
- Take a service position
- Co-facilitate a virtual meeting
- Stay after the meeting & connect with a newcomer

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: 1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

2nd Reading: Galatians 5:1, 13-18

Gospel: Luke 9:51-62