

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Addiction robs our families of more than any thief ever could. It takes our freedom and attempts to order our families around serving the addiction rather than around serving God and each other. It disrobes individuals and families of our human dignity, muddies the truth, distorts the proper use of our will, and leaves us feeling half-dead.

This week's Sunday Gospel Reading includes a story we have likely heard many times—that of the Good Samaritan. The passage begins as Jesus is being put to the test by a man looking for a loophole. He asked our Lord what he must do to inherit eternal life and is able to cite the religious law:

*"You shall love the Lord, your God,
with all your heart,
with all your being,
with all your strength,
and with all your mind,
and your neighbor as yourself."
[Jesus] replied to him, "You have answered
correctly; do this and you will live."*

Then Jesus told a story to illustrate what love of neighbor really looks like:

*"A man fell victim to robbers
as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.
They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him
half-dead.
A priest happened to be going down that road,
but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite
side.
Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw
him, he passed by on the opposite side.
But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him
was moved with compassion at the sight.
He approached the victim, poured oil and wine
over his wounds and bandaged them.
Then he lifted him up on his own animal,
took him to an inn, and cared for him.
The next day he took out two silver coins
and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction,
'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have
given you, I shall repay you on my way back.'
Which of these three, in your opinion,
was neighbor to the robbers' victim?"
He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy."
Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."*

Like many biblical tales, we might try to identify with one of the characters in the plot. In this case, we may reflect on times when we were more like the priest or Levite who passed by the man in need as they crossed the street to avoid him. Perhaps we see ourselves in the caring role of the Samaritan. What about recognizing ourselves in the position of the beaten man?

Reflection Questions

The story of the Good Samaritan informs us about how family addiction recovery works in a very sacramental way. We were helpless on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho (representing the path away from God). The priest and Levite are on the same route, symbolizing religious views that had become too self-absorbed and unable to help.

The Samaritan traveler, however, was moved to pity at the sight of the beaten-up man. Early Church Fathers read this as a metaphor for the healing nature of God made flesh, noting that Samaritans were cultural outcasts and despised by many. It is significant that he approached the endangered man by pouring wine and oil over his wounds.

Jesus Christ approaches us in our brokenness and humiliation. Oil, which is used during baptisms, confirmation, priestly ordinations, and anointing of the sick, reaffirms our human dignity. The wine that is converted into his blood is poured into us to heal and transform us. The price He pays for our redemption is one that has not been earned nor can it be fully repaid.

In our community, it often takes a person who knows the pain and shame of family addiction to stop and support another with real experience, strength, and hope rather than some lofty platitudes. As we reflect on the gift that is our recovery, we give thanks for the mercy with which we are treated so that we may go and do likewise for others.

- What has addiction stolen from you and your family?
 - How does this form your understanding of being powerless over addiction/alcohol?
- How do you interpret the difference between serving the addiction and serving God/others?
- How were you cared for by others in recovery when you finally took the plunge to get help?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 30:10-14

Responsorial Psalm: 69:14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36, 37

2nd Reading: Colossians 1:15-20

Gospel: Luke 10:25:37