

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



When life spins out of control, we tend to respond in one of two ways—either by hiding and isolating or by getting very busy. 12-step recovery forms us with new tools and methods to trust God, discern the next right indicated action, and live a meaningful, balanced life.

This week, we hear another familiar gospel story. Jesus is welcomed by Martha and her sister Mary upon entering a village. While Mary is seated at the feet of Jesus, listening to him speak, Martha is burdened with the duties of serving. Frustrated, Martha begins a dialogue:

"Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving?"

Tell her to help me."

The Lord said to her in reply,

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things.

There is need of only one thing.

Mary has chosen the better part

and it will not be taken from her."

Many people read the story of Martha and Mary as a reflection on action versus contemplation. This seems fitting, particularly as our culture values excessive busyness. In fact, when asked *how* we're doing, we often respond with *what* we're doing as we present an exhausting list of deeds to prove our worth. As we relate this story to our own journey, we might focus on Jesus' statement, "There is need of only one thing."

Recovery is a program of action. We often hear that you cannot think your way into right action, but you can act your way into right thinking. This usually involves changing our behavior even when our attitude is not yet ready. However, action which is not organized by God adds additional anxiety and worry to our self-absorbed patterns. We must first learn to hear and discern God's word. This can be done through various forms of prayer, reading scripture, and having honest conversations with others in our recovery fellowship.

The life-and-death nature of addiction streamlines the path toward relying on God. Once we come to truly see our recovery as the path orchestrated by our Lord, He becomes the *One Thing*. If we stay close, few other things matter.

Recovery literature provides a simple way to help God order our actions each day. "In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 86).

Reflection Questions

When we seek God in prayer and meditation, He informs the organization of our life. In this way, discernment becomes easier. We do not struggle coming up with the next right task because God is our Employer. We may not be able to avoid suffering, and we certainly do not choose to forget about all past sufferings. Our usefulness to others still seeking freedom relies upon our ability to relate to their current experience.

Therefore, with our mind, body, and soul ordered in the ways of God, we have freedom to express our gratitude for what was, what is, and what is yet to come. We are disciples for Jesus and share the good news of our recovery as he would have us. Saint Paul expresses a similar mission in this Sunday's Second Reading as we hear:

Brothers and sisters:

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake,
and in my flesh I am filling up
what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ*

Grace happens when we see that our sufferings can heal others. Freedom happens when we can maintain peace at the feet of Jesus as we listen to him speak.

- Describe how you find balance between action and contemplation in your recovery.
- How do you make decisions in recovery, either day-to-day choices or larger ones that require discernment?
 - Share any daily routines or patterns that help keep your life ordered around God.

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Genesis 18:1-10a

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 15:2-3, 3-4, 5

2nd Reading: Colossians 1:24-28

Gospel: Luke 10:38-42