

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time



Suffering often occurs as a result of unmet expectations or when people behave differently than how we think they should. When things go in a different direction, our ability to maintain peace and serenity is related to our capacity to let go. While active in our addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments, we numbed our lack of control by acting out. It helped maintain the illusion of authority over people, places, things, and outcomes.

Now that we are attempting to live life on God's terms, we must build a new set of tools in order to deal with the uncomfortable feelings that first arise when getting clean, sober, abstinent, and free. We have given up the role of director and seek counsel from a new Employer.

Letting go is a rather vague and ambiguous way to describe the act of putting our trust in God. We hear this often in Christian circles and recovery fellowships, and it usually includes delayed gratification—a mindset of which we may lack some experience. However, given our limited insight into God's plans for us and the rest of the world, we would be wise to attempt something different.

This Sunday's First Reading explores the challenges we place on ourselves and the freedom that comes with putting our lives in God's care:

*Who can know God's counsel,
or who can conceive what the LORD intends?
For the deliberations of mortals are timid,
and unsure are our plans.
For the corruptible body burdens the soul
and the earthen shelter weighs down the mind that
has many concerns.
And scarce do we guess the things on earth,
and what is within our grasp we find with difficulty;
but when things are in heaven, who can search them
out?
Or who ever knew your counsel, except you had
given wisdom
and sent your holy spirit from on high?
And thus were the paths of those on earth made
straight.*

Seeking the will of God is less about burdening ourselves to find all the hidden answers to our concerns but is rather an opportunity to maintain our principles while accepting life as it is in this moment.

Reflection Questions

In the Twelve Steps, the act of surrendering, letting go, and turning our will and lives over to God's care follows an honest First Step Inventory. With the consequences of managing our lives on our own written out in front of us, it becomes easier to let God call the shots. More formally, we might refer to this as *fear of the Lord*. In recovery, fear of the Lord is manifested in our willingness to be held accountable.

Summarizing Emmet Fox, God does not need to be the only thing in our lives, but He must be the first thing. As our relationship with Him grows, we notice that we're less attached to our own expectations and begin to trust that He will give directions as needed.

"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple," Jesus declares in this Sunday's Gospel Reading as he stresses the importance of establishing a strong spiritual foundation. "In the same way, anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple," he adds. Instead of just surrendering on our own terms, a full surrender is necessary for recovery.

Accepting and adapting to the world around us takes time and practice. Each time we pause, suspend judgment, and ask God for direction, we grow in our capacity to let go. Instead of thinking too much about outcomes, we show up where we're needed, take the next right action, allow ourselves to be accountable to a group and to trusted individuals, and enjoy the freedom that God gives us, one day at a time.

- What experiences have given you a chance to practice letting go of controlling people, places, things, and outcomes?
- What was helpful to establish a strong spiritual foundation in the early phases of your recovery?
- How do you allow yourself to be held accountable in 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
- Read testimonials of CIR community members
- Enroll in the Catholic in Recovery Novena
- Pre-order *The Catholic in Recovery Workbook*

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Wisdom 9:13-18b

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17

Second Reading: Philemon 9-10, 12-17

Gospel: Luke 14:25-33