

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time



This Sunday's Gospel Reading highlights the journey of the recovering addict and those who have known the darkness of compulsive behavior and unhealthy attachments—the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Twelve-step addiction recovery provides a pathway for us to experience how God longs for our return, renewal, and recovery. When overlapped with the sacraments of the Catholic Church, even the most challenged among us can find a life of joy, purpose, and freedom.

Realizing our powerlessness and need for Christ allows God to make a new creation of us. Reconciliation is made possible by the blood of Jesus who calls us to pick up our cross as we make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. By sharing it with Him, ourselves, and another human being, the shame and sin of our trespasses are removed.

Transformation may happen quickly, or it may happen slowly. Either way, we do not have to wait for God to meet us along the way. The Parable of the Prodigal Son tells the account of a pleasure-seeking son who asks his father for his inheritance and then squanders it on drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, and moral debauchery. Upon hitting rock bottom, the son decides to return to the father for help:

*Coming to his senses he thought,
'How many of my father's hired workers
have more than enough food to eat,
but here am I, dying from hunger.
I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to
him,
'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against
you.
I no longer deserve to be called your son;
treat me as you would treat one of your hired
workers.'"
So he got up and went back to his father.
While he was still a long way off,
his father caught sight of him, and was filled with
compassion.
He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.*

This story captures the merciful love of the father and the saving grace received by the younger, prodigal son. However, it does not end there as Jesus remarks on the experience of the elder son. Filled with self-righteousness, the older son scorns at his father's acceptance of the prodigal, making a case for himself while pointing out the unfair nature of the father's embrace. Divine love tends to be unfair, yet we can be quick to point it out when it's not in our benefit.

Reflection Questions

While relating to the experience of the younger son, we must heed the warning and learn from the bitter angst of the older son. It is not uncommon for someone to recover from a seemingly hopeless condition then, months or years later, develop a tendency to resent those who have not yet come to their senses.

Therefore, it is important for us to make a daily commitment to surrender ourselves to God's will and take on the compassionate attitude of the prodigal's father. As 12-step recovery literature notes, "What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. 'How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done'" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 85).

- What old things have passed away as you have taken on the identity as a beloved son or daughter of God? What new things have come?
- How do you relate to the characters in the Parable of the Prodigal Son?
- How do you maintain a healthy spiritual condition and carry the vision of God's will into your activities?

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: Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Gospel: Luke 15:1-32