

## Reflection Questions

- How has a “thorn in your side’ or a perpetual weakness kept you humble and relying upon God?
- How have you experienced unity and fellowship forming out of “weakness” in your life?
- In this week’s Gospel reading, Christ returns to his native town and is amazed by the lack of faith he finds. Jesus remarks, “A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house.”
  - Have you experienced moments when it’s been difficult to share your faith or your recovery journey with those closest to you?
  - Have you found it easier to share with those that are willing and open to hear the message?

## 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Many spiritual principles within addiction recovery and Christian faith have a perplexing, contradictory nature to them on the surface. You may be puzzled hearing things like “surrender to win” and “the first shall be last and the last shall be first.” Distorted cultural conceptions of success—based on power, strength, and having everything figured out—can be barriers to personal growth in recovery and hinder our personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Most of us begin our recovery journey with shame and questions about how things ever got to this point. Over time, we realize we are not alone and can begin to appreciate the new way of life sparked by addiction and sustained by a sacramental approach to recovery. God has gotten our attention and we now rely on Him to direct our attitude and behavior each day.

Saint Paul summarizes the humble, honest, and open attitude we ought to adopt in this week's second reading (2 Cor. 12:7-10):

*Brothers and sisters:*

*That I, Paul, might not become too elated,  
because of the abundance of the revelations,  
a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of  
Satan,  
to beat me, to keep me from being too elated.  
Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it  
might leave me,  
but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you,  
for power is made perfect in weakness."  
I will rather boast most gladly of my  
weaknesses,  
in order that the power of Christ may dwell with  
me.  
Therefore, I am content with weaknesses,  
insults,  
hardships, persecutions, and constraints,  
for the sake of Christ;  
for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Paul learned what we all have the opportunity to discovery when we work through a thorough first step—when I am powerless, I am strong. Even upon finding freedom from our primary addiction or unhealthy attachment, we find that there are other aspects of our lives that may prove to be a thorn in our side.

Relinquishing the expectation to be perfect and seeking a spiritual progress can be helpful and provide patience with ourselves as we relate our journey to that of Saint Paul. The grace of Christ is greater than any personal strength we may have.

Recovery literature sheds light on the fruits of withstanding trials and difficulties, even when executed imperfectly, knowing that our power rests in God. We can gain much from the experience shared in Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (p. 104):

‘All those who have persisted have found strength not ordinarily their own. They have found wisdom beyond their usual capability. And they have increasingly found a peace of mind which can stand firm in the face of difficult circumstances. We discover that we do receive guidance for our lives to just about the extent that we stop making demands upon God to give it to us on order and on our terms.’

We may reflect upon the expectations we hold for God, ourselves, and others as we gaze upon the journey ahead. Rather than leaning into our own insufficiencies, we move forward and rest on the grace and power of God.