

Reflection Questions

- How have you experienced self-will driving you toward isolation? Can you identify with the experience of lost relationships, mistrust, fear, resentment, and loneliness as a result of self-exertion?
- What does your image of God look like? Do you see Him as a shepherd whom gathers His flock and cares for you?

Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

O most holy heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love you, and with lively sorrow for my sins I offer you this poor heart of mine.

Make me humble, patient, pure and wholly obedient to your will.

Grant, Good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you.

Protect me in the midst of danger.

Comfort me in my afflictions.

Give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death.

Amen.

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time



In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ.

This verse from Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians introduces this week's second reading (Eph. 2:13-18) and summarizes our journey through recovery with Christ. We were like sheep without a shepherd, directing life as we saw fit. In our active addiction we experience lost relationships, mistrust, a life ran by fear, resentment toward others, and a faint loneliness that stems from a lack of guidance. As we gaze around, it becomes increasingly apparent that our flock has scattered.

We are told that if we are to do great things during this lifetime, it will have to come on our own accord. If we succeed, the glory is short-lived and we thirst for more. When we come up short, we either exert ourselves more or find unhealthy ways to cope. Self-will drives us toward isolation.

Our culture has always thirsted for communion with our Lord. Our restless hearts seek God and love in many things, often missing the mark and creating addictive patterns that we cannot escape on our own. We often have to experience great pain before inviting God and others to be a part of our healing.

This week's Gospel reading (Mk. 6:30-34) picks up from last week after the twelve disciples return from sharing their experience, strength, and hope as they were sent out two-by-two. People were compelled by the message of new life and repentance that Jesus and his disciples had to offer. We hear about Christ's response to the large following that began surrounded them:

When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus radiates in this story and is the incarnation of God's everlasting love for us. This love is the moving force behind all He has done for us, including death on the cross and offering Himself in the Blessed Sacrament.

Acceptance and understanding of this is woven throughout the twelve steps and begins at *Step Two—Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity*. With a clear awareness that we are powerless over the source of our addiction and that our lives had become unmanageable (Step One), we turn to God as the source of our recovery.

This is the nature of redemption and path toward salvation that God has made available to us. We hear God proclaim this clearly through the prophet Jeremiah in this week's first reading (Jer. 23:1-6):

I myself will gather the remnant of my flock from all the lands to which I have driven them and bring them back to their meadow; there they shall increase and multiply. I will appoint shepherds for them who will shepherd them so that they need no longer fear and tremble; and none shall be missing, says the Lord.

We put our faith in God as we move forward, believing that He will guide us in right paths, lead us to restful waters, and refresh our soul. Even as we walk through dark valleys, He will be by our side to give us courage (Psalm 23:1-3).