

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time



We plunge into the waters of baptism each time we share the depths of our dark past or connect with a member describing the cunning, baffling, and powerful nature of their addiction. It is said that when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, he was submerged into hell before being raised to new life. In fact, in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus uses the term baptism when he talks about the spiritual plunge that he will be taking with his death: "There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!" (Lk 12:50).

An essential part of Catholic spirituality and 12-step wisdom is maintaining a memory of the conditions that forced us to seek help. It reminds us of our need to keep Christ—his life, passion, death, and resurrection—ever present in our lives. Recalling our past can be a charitable act that gives hope to the newcomer in need of healing.

When we enter or exit a Catholic church, most of us make it a habit to dip our fingers into holy water and make the Sign of the Cross. The simple plunge into these waters is a way to bind us once again with the grace of the Sacrament of Baptism, through which we recognize our powerlessness and the unmanageability of our lives, while giving thanks for the redeeming power of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Saint Paul reminds us of the graces offered by our baptism in this week's Second Reading:

*Are you unaware that we who were
baptized into Christ Jesus
were baptized into his death?
We were indeed buried with him
through baptism into death,
so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead
by the glory of the Father,
we too might live in newness of life.*

*If, then, we have died with Christ,
we believe that we shall also live with him.
We know that Christ, raised from the dead,
dies no more;
death no longer has power over him.
As to his death, he died to sin once and for all;
as to his life, he lives for God.
Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as
dead to sin
and living for God in Christ Jesus.*

As a result of the realization of our own helplessness, we place our lives into the hands of God. Through Jesus Christ, God redeems us by entering into human form and taking upon Himself all the sins of the world. Jesus, our Savior, understands the depths of despair that we have faced as addicts as he is with us to guide our recovery efforts.

Clothed in the grace of Jesus, we begin to journey through recovery by staying in touch with our need for redemption. Regardless of where we are, this should be practiced every day. Humility and honesty are essential to participate in the grace of baptism through the first step of recovery.

It is suggested that, during the course of working through step 1, we write down compromising situations where our addictive and compulsive behavior has put us and others in harm's way. It is a simple, yet hardly easy, way of coming to terms with the consequences that our own will has propelled us toward.

In recovery, we are given a gift to know Jesus in a personal and necessary way. The first step is a crucial starting point where the insufficiency of our human resources is brought to light. This step is a tangible way to carve space in our lives to surrender to the mercy made available by God's grace and to participate in the reality of our baptism.

- How does a fresh memory of your past keep you dedicated to recovery and reliant upon God?
 - What do you do to keep your memory "green"?

- How have others shaped your recovery by sharing the depths of their own dark past?

- What experience do you have with working through the first step?

Saint Gregory the Theologian on Baptism

“Baptism is God’s most beautiful and magnificent gift... We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift. It is called gift because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own; grace since it is given even to the guilty; Baptism because sin is buried in the water; anointing for it is priestly and royal as are those who are anointed; enlightenment because it radiates light; clothing since it veils our shame; bath because it washes; and seal as it is our guard and the sign of God’s lordship.

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19

2nd Reading: Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

Gospel: Matthew 10:37-42