

Sixteenth 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 Sunday's Second Reading 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 experienced 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.

Cultural norms suggest that if we are to do great things, 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.

As a people, we have always thirsted for communion with our Lord. Our restless hearts seek God 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 picks up from last week after the twelve disciples return from sharing the good news 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 Jesus' 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, which expresses God's desire for our good. We can begin to accept and understand this when we approach 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 1), we turn to God as the source of our recovery.

This is the nature of redemption and the path toward salvation that God has made available to us. We hear God proclaim this clearly through the prophet Jeremiah in this Sunday's First Reading:

*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.

- What was the turning point that prompted you to seek a recovery community and invite God's help?
- How have others directed your way and revealed the Sacred Heart of Jesus to you?
- How has your image and understanding of God been shaped through your experience in recovery?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23:1-3, 3-4, 5, 6

2nd Reading: Ephesians 2:13-18

Gospel: Mark 6:30-34