

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The Fourth Sunday of Advent invites us to prepare our hearts with hope and trust as the birth of Christ draws near. For those recovering from lust addiction, this season can stir vulnerability—old patterns, emotional triggers, or loneliness may surface. Yet Advent assures us that Christ comes into precisely these fragile spaces with healing and strength.

This Sunday's second reading offers a word of identity and purpose—reminding us that grace calls us into a new way of life marked by belonging and “obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5-6):

Through him we have received the grace of apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles, among whom are you also, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

Lust addiction often distorts our sense of identity, telling us we are defined by our behavior, shame, or failures. But Paul reminds us of the deeper truth: we are called to belong to Christ.

In recovery, we discover that belonging precedes healing. Surrender becomes possible when we trust that our worth is rooted in God's love, not in performance or secrecy.

In this Sunday's gospel, Joseph wrestles with confusion, shame, and fear until God intervenes with a message of courage and clarity (Matthew 1:18-24):

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” ... When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

Joseph's experience mirrors the internal battles of recovery. There is confusion, fear of being exposed, and the desire to withdraw quietly. But God meets Joseph in this vulnerable moment. He reassures him. He offers direction. He invites him to trust.

Recovery works the same way. We may not see angels in dreams, but God speaks through sponsors, meetings, accountability, Scripture, and the quiet nudges of conscience. The “obedience of faith” becomes the

willingness to take the next right step—even when we don't feel ready.

As Christmas nears, we are invited to imitate Joseph's courage. Lust addiction is weakened each time we choose honesty over secrecy, connection over isolation, prayer over impulse, surrender over self-reliance. Healing is not instantaneous; it grows as we repeatedly say yes to God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where do you identify with Joseph's fear or confusion in your recovery journey?
- What helps you remember that you “belong to Jesus Christ” rather than to old behaviors?
- What next right step is God inviting you to take this Advent?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 7:10-14

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

SECOND READING Romans 1:1-7

GOSPEL Matthew 1:18-24