

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Many of us struggle to make sense of the suffering connected to lust addiction. Some consequences were visible: damaged relationships, loss of trust, spiritual distance, or emotional fallout. But much of the suffering was hidden, such as shame we could not speak about, isolation we lived in, anxiety beneath the surface, and a restless dissatisfaction that never seemed to quiet. In recovery, we begin to see that while we did not choose every wound we carried, we often chose behaviors that kept those wounds open. Acting out did not heal loneliness, fear, or insecurity. It kept those deeper hurts from being faced and healed.

The Twelve Steps help us approach this truth without being crushed by it. Step One invites us to admit powerlessness over lust and the ways our lives became unmanageable. This honesty is not condemnation; it is the beginning of freedom. Denial kept us cycling through secrecy, rationalization, and shame. When we admit that our old solutions are not working, surrender becomes a doorway to grace.

As we grow spiritually, recovery becomes more than stopping behavior. It becomes a new way of responding to life. Even when triggers, stress, or emotional discomfort arise, something in us begins to change. We become less driven by impulse and more grounded in awareness and choice. Instead of escaping into fantasy or secrecy, we learn to bring our experiences into the light. As *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* says, “It never occurred to us that we needed to change ourselves to meet conditions, whatever they were” (p. 47). Recovery teaches us to meet loneliness, stress, and emotion with prayer, connection, accountability, and honesty rather than acting out.

This Sunday’s first reading shows how healing is connected to love in action (Isaiah 58:7-10):

Thus says the Lord: Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Lust narrows our world to self-gratification and isolation. God widens our hearts. Healing deepens as we learn to live in truth, service, and real connection. As we step out of secrecy and into honest community, we discover that love expressed in healthy ways brings the healing we once tried to counterfeit.

The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that Christ understands struggle. Because He was tested in what He suffered, He is able to help those who are being tested (Hebrews 2:18). We are not alone in temptation or weakness. In recovery, we also become people who understand others without judgment because we know our own vulnerability.

Saint Paul echoes this humility in this Sunday’s second reading (1 Corinthians 2:3-5):

I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of Spirit and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

We do not carry hope because we are strong. We carry hope because we are honest. God works through our willingness, accountability, and humility.

Finally, Jesus says, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14-16). Our light shines when we live in truth instead of secrecy, connection instead of isolation, and humility instead of pride. What once felt like our deepest shame can become part of how we understand and help others. Recovery teaches us that God wastes nothing. Even our struggles can become light for someone else.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where did acting out keep deeper emotional or spiritual wounds from healing?
- Where is God inviting you to change how you respond to triggers or emotions?
- How has your struggle helped you understand others with greater compassion?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 58:7-10

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

GOSPEL Matthew 5:13-16