

Sixth Sunday of Easter



The progress we make in our recovery takes many forms and happens at various rates of change. Sometimes we can recognize monumental growth taking place in our lives and in our response to events happening around us. Other times, it feels like we take three steps forward only to take two steps back. Peace and serenity can seem like a far cry from the perceived reality of our mental and emotional condition.

It is important to lean on a fellowship of believers who share similar experience in order to avoid complete discouragement. We are bound to face obstacles in our spiritual journey. It takes a lot of courage to do something different in response to our family's addiction, especially as our previous patterns were to avoid, deny, escape, or over-involve ourselves. Jesus and our fellows in recovery offer a new way of life.

At first, we borrow hope from our brothers and sisters next to us, knowing that they can relate to our experience and show us a new way. As addiction began to manifest in our families, many lies were formed that need to be reshaped. The list is long and common among us: "This is my fault," "We are beyond help," "I'll never change," "I can't trust others," "I can't be loved," and "Without me, my loved one will die," are just a few of the lies that become ingrained within us until we find spiritual help.

Dr. Peter Kleponis, a Catholic addiction therapist, notes that participation in 12-step recovery groups helps us "let go of the shame and begin to change those core beliefs so that your new core beliefs are: I am lovable; If people really knew me, they could love me more; I can count on others and God to meet my needs; and God and healthy relationships are my greatest need and source of comfort."

While leaning on the Twelve Steps and sacraments of the Church, we see God propelling us to new heights. Slowly, we become honest with ourselves and our attachment to things not of God begin to loosen. Moments of peace arise. We experience others in recovery loving us until we are capable of loving ourselves.

As we move toward Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit, we hear Jesus offer a word of hope and peace. He speaks truth to the lies that enslave us and shares the power of the Holy Spirit in order to guide us to freedom.

Reflection Questions

Building on last week's theme of finding the Spirit of Christ within us, we hear Jesus proclaim in this Sunday's Gospel Reading:

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him. But you know him, because he remains with you, and will be in you."

The disciples received a similar message from Jesus when he returned to them after his resurrection. While showing his wounds to his afraid and isolated followers, Jesus calmly greeted them by saying, "Peace be with you," or "Shalom"—a Hebrew term that not only means peace but also implies wholeness, harmony, and completeness.

We have been crafted in the image and likeness of God. Our identity lies in the unmerited grace that we are His beloved sons and daughters, regardless of our attempts to cut ourselves off from the Lord. It is possible that our efforts to find comfort are rooted in a desire that only God can fill. As we recognize the limitations and consequences of directing life according to our own will, we put faith in our Lord doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

- Looking back on where you were before you found recovery, what progress do you recognize related to your attitude, behavior, and spiritual life?
- What lies have you believed that kept you isolated from God and others?
- How have you experienced peace through your recovery journey?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20

Second Reading: 1 Peter 3:15-18

Gospel: John 14:15-21