

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Recovery from lust addiction often reaches a turning point when we realize that understanding our problem is not enough to change it. We may recognize our patterns, feel sincere conviction, and want freedom, yet still find ourselves returning to fantasy, secrecy, or compulsive behavior. Lasting change requires more than insight. It calls for surrender, accountability, and a willingness to begin again on new terms.

Saint Paul offers a powerful image for this transformation in this Sunday's second reading (Romans 6:3-11):

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.

This speaks directly to recovery. Something old must be surrendered so that something new can take root. We cannot remain attached to the patterns that feed lust while also expecting to live in freedom.

This movement is closely connected to Step One. We come to admit that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable. This admission includes behaviors, but it also reaches deeper. It includes our thoughts, fantasies, habits of attention, emotional escapes, and the ways we have used others or images to avoid pain, loneliness, fear, or vulnerability. Step One asks us to stop pretending that we can manage these patterns privately.

For many of us, this realization develops slowly. We may have tried to rely on willpower, religious resolve, filters, promises, or shame-driven determination. Some of these tools may have a proper place, but none can replace honesty, surrender,

and connection. When we keep recovery private, we remain vulnerable to the same secrecy that helped the addiction grow. What changes us is not simply trying harder, but becoming willing to live in the truth with God and others.

This can feel like a death to the old self. We may need to surrender access, routines, relationships, media habits, or ways of thinking that once seemed harmless. We may grieve the loss of coping mechanisms that gave temporary comfort. Yet what feels like loss can become the beginning of real freedom. When we stop protecting the old pattern, we create space for grace to work.

Saint Paul reminds us that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has power over Him. This is the hope at the center of recovery. Lust, secrecy, and shame do not have to define our future. Through Christ, a new way of seeing, loving, and relating becomes possible.

The Gospel reinforces the cost of this change (Matthew 10:37-42). Jesus teaches that following Him requires placing Him above everything else. In recovery, this means that freedom must become more important than comfort, secrecy, or immediate relief. We cannot hold on to both lust and the new life Christ offers.

In practical terms, this new life grows through daily choices. We practice honest disclosure. We reach out before temptation becomes a crisis. We stay accountable to a sponsor or trusted peer. We guard our eyes, our imagination, and our use of technology. We seek the sacraments, prayer, and fellowship as sources of strength.

The Gospel's final image also matters. Jesus says that even a cup of cold water given to another will not lose its reward. In lust addiction recovery, small acts of humility matter. A phone

call, an honest check-in, a decision to look away, or a moment of prayer may seem ordinary, but these choices form a new pattern of life.

Recovery is not about perfection. It is about direction. Each day offers another opportunity to choose honesty over secrecy, connection over isolation, and freedom over compulsion. As we surrender the old way, we begin to receive the new life God has been offering all along.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What patterns, habits, or access points are you being invited to surrender in this season?

- How do honesty and accountability help you move from secrecy toward freedom?

- What small daily choices are helping form a new pattern of life?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

RESP. PS. Psalm 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19

SECOND READING Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

GOSPEL Matthew 10:37-42