

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



We plunge into the waters of baptism each time we share the depths of our journey with addiction or connect with a member seeking to find new life through the sacraments and 12-step recovery. Jesus can be found in the darkness and in the light. In fact, in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus uses the term baptism when he talks about the spiritual plunge that he will be taking with his death: “There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!” (Luke 12:50).

An essential part of Catholic spirituality and 12-step wisdom is maintaining a memory of the past so as to keep us moving toward a brighter future. It reminds us of our need to keep Jesus Christ—his life, passion, death, and resurrection—ever present in our lives. Recalling our past can be a charitable act that gives hope to the newcomer in need of healing.

When we enter or exit a Catholic church, most of us make it a habit to dip our fingers into holy water and make the Sign of the Cross. This simple act is a way to bind us once again with the grace of the Sacrament of Baptism, through which we recognize our powerlessness and find identity as beloved children of God.

Saint Paul reminds us of the graces offered by our baptism in this Sunday's Second Reading:

*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.*

*If, then, we have died with Christ,
we believe that we shall also live with him.
We know that Christ, raised from the dead,
dies no more;
death no longer has power over him.
As to his death, he died to sin once and for all;
as to his life, he lives for God.
Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as
dead to sin
and living for God in Christ Jesus.*

Reflection Questions

As we fully realize how unmanageable our lives had become, we placed ourselves into the hands of God. Through Jesus Christ, God redeems us by entering into human form and taking upon himself all the sins of the world. Jesus, our Savior, understands the extent of despair that we have faced as addicts as he is with us to guide our recovery efforts.

Clothed in the grace of Jesus, we begin to journey through recovery by staying in touch with our need for redemption. Regardless of where we are, this can be practiced every day. Humility and honesty are essential to participate in the grace of baptism in conjunction with the first step of recovery.

It is suggested that, during the course of working through Step One, we write down compromising situations where our addictive and compulsive behavior has put us and others in harm's way. It is a simple, yet hardly easy, way of coming to terms with the consequences that our own will has propelled us toward.

In recovery, we are given a gift to know Jesus in a personal and necessary way. The first step is a crucial starting point where the insufficiency of our human resources is brought to light. This step is a tangible way to carve space in our lives to surrender to the mercy made available by God's grace and to continue participating in the reality of our baptism.

- How does a fresh memory of your past keep you dedicated to recovery and reliant upon God?
 - What do you do to keep your memory "green"?

- How do you maintain a tangible connection with your baptism?

- Share what is going on in your life today and tie it to a recovery principle or spiritual solution.

Saint Gregory the Theologian on Baptism

“Baptism is God’s most beautiful and magnificent gift... We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift. It is called gift because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own; grace since it is given even to the guilty; Baptism because sin is buried in the water; anointing for it is priestly and royal as are those who are anointed; enlightenment because it radiates light; clothing since it veils our shame; bath because it washes; and seal as it is our guard and the sign of God’s lordship. -CCC, 1216

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19

Second Reading: Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

Gospel: Matthew 10:37-42